

Bible Handbooks for Young People

THE
PROPHETICAL BOOKS
OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT



JOHN B. COOPER, D.D.

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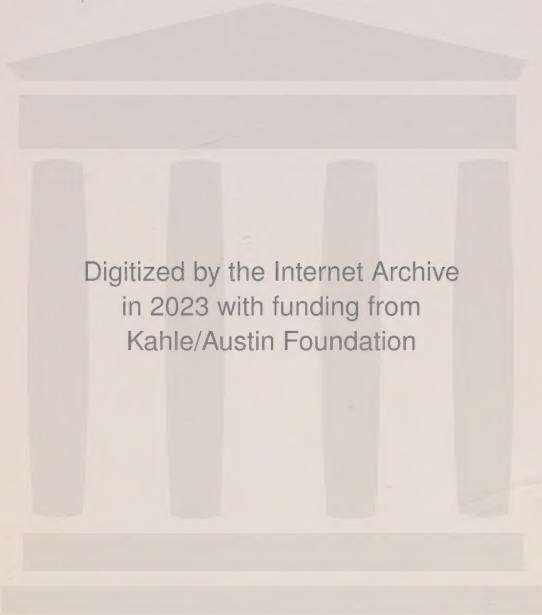
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Bible Handbooks for Young People

IV

THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

BY

JOHN B. GOUGH PIDGE, D. D.,

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"The opening of thy words giveth light"

—Ps. 119 : 130

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THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS

OF THE

OLD TESTAMENT

CHAPTER I

THE OFFICE OF THE PROPHETS

THE word prophet, in modern speech, signifies one who foretells. Playing the role of a prophet means attempting to predict the future. The ability to forecast is supposed to be the prophet's peculiar and only prerogative. But technically, even in modern speech, the word has a broader meaning, signifying an interpreter of the divine will, and a few centuries ago this broader signification was the popular one.

In the days of Queen Elizabeth the meetings of the clergy were called prophesyings, a word that would hardly suggest at present the true character of those assemblies, as devoted purely to the interpretation of Scripture. So in the title of Jeremy Taylor's famous work, the "Liberty of Prophesying," it is not prediction but preaching that he has in mind; the liberty of prophesying is simply freedom of speech. The word prophesying in these cases suggests simply the notion of speaking out; the prophet speaks forth that which is in his heart.

Gradually, however, the larger meaning of the term has been forgotten, until at present the word prophesying, used

in any other sense than that of prediction, would be misunderstood by most people. This narrow definition of the word has undoubtedly arisen from an imperfect conception of the task of the Hebrew prophets, as men engaged almost exclusively in revealing the future. We picture them as standing before the men of their day, pointing down the long vista of the future years, and describing things yet to be, which they by Divine inspiration were enabled to foretell. No doubt such prediction was a part of the prophet's mission ; but we are very wide of the mark when we assume it to be the whole or even the chief part of his appointed work.

Prophecy in the Scriptures is a far larger word than prediction, and if we would obtain a true idea of the prophet's task in ancient Israel, we must begin by dismissing all modern notions of the word, and seeking in the Scriptures for the signification of the terms which describe the prophet's functions.

Three terms are employed in the Old Testament to designate a prophet. The most common of these, occurring about three hundred times, is the word *nabi*, which is also the oldest name.

A passage in Samuel seems to teach the greater antiquity of the word *roëh*. There we are told that "he that is now called a prophet was beforetime called a seer" (1 Sam. 9 : 9). The natural interpretation of these words must however be set aside, since we actually find *nabi* in the Scriptures long before *roëh* ; and we are compelled to understand the writer as meaning simply that *roëh* was an earlier designation of Samuel himself, which was subsequently displaced by *nabi*.

The original meaning of *nabi* is extremely uncertain. Gesenius derives it from a word signifying "to bubble up" ; Fleischer makes it mean a spokesman, as also does Ewald ;

while Kuenen gives it the signification of one inspired, *i. e.*, a man "possessed," it might be by Jehovah or by some other deity, for there were both true and false prophets.

The second word, *roëh*, "seer," is used only ten times, seven of them being in connection with the name of Samuel. It describes the prophet as one who sees what other men do not, a man taught of God in visions.

Chozeh is the third term, used twenty-two times, chiefly in the books of Chronicles. It does not differ essentially from *roëh*, though the use of the two words together in 1 Chron. 29 : 29 would suggest that there was some occult difference between them to the Hebrew mind.

The Hebrew scholars who translated the Old Testament into Greek have thrown very little light on the exact meaning of these words. They invariably translated *nabi*, and sometimes the other terms, by *προφήτης* (*prophētes*), from which our modern word prophet is derived. This word does not properly mean a fore-teller, but rather a forth-teller, the preposition *προ* (*pro*) signifying not "before-hand" but "for." The prophet speaks *for* another, acts as his mouthpiece. Thus Æschylus calls Apollo Jove's prophet, that is, interpreter, messenger; Plato names poets the prophets of the Muses; while Pindar exclaims: "Utter thy strains, O Muse, and I will be thy prophet." The classical Greek word for a seer, or predictor of future events, was *μάντις* (*mantis*). Plato clearly distinguishes between these two, describing the latter as persons who uttered oracles in a state of divine frenzy, the former as the interpreters of such utterances.

Our investigation of these terms has not thrown a great deal of light upon the prophet's function, but it has advanced us so far that we can safely say that prediction is too narrow a word to describe it. Hebrew, Greek, and English words, all conveyed originally a broader meaning.

It is only in the later usage of the Greek and of the English words that this narrower meaning has become the exclusive sense. The principal Hebrew word, *nabi*, whatever its exact signification may be, certainly does not convey the idea of foretelling, and none of the other words used to describe it lay the chief emphasis upon that.

Turning now from the meaning of words to other sources of information, we find the prophet's chief function very clearly portrayed in the words which God uses to Moses in Exodus 7 : 1, 2 : "And the Lord said unto Moses, see, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh : and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet," that is, an interpreter, or as it is expressed in Exodus 4 : 16, "he shall be to thee instead of a mouth." This is precisely the ancient Greek conception of a prophet, and justifies the use of that word in translating the Hebrew *nabi*. The prophet is the mouthpiece of another ; the prophet of Jehovah is therefore the divine mouthpiece, the interpreter of his will and ways to men.

We see this conception predominating in the various sketches of the prophet's mission.

Thus, Isaiah was to instruct the people in righteousness, though his work to all outward appearance would be fruitless (6 : 9-13) ; Jeremiah was to act the part of a reformer, rooting out, pulling down, destroying, building, and planting (1 : 10) ; Ezekiel was to be a watchman over the house of Israel, warning all classes of men (3 : 17-21) ; Hosea was to exhibit in his own sad home a picture of Israel's apostasy and sin (chap. 1-3), while Micah describes not only his own but every other prophetic mission in the words, "I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin" (3 : 8).

From these sketches of the prophet's mission, we see that he was to be the teacher of his times in moral and

spiritual things. He was to teach the men of his own day.

They, like us, needed to be talked to much more about the present than the future, and it was with the present that the prophet was chiefly concerned. He sought to win men from vice and to teach them virtue, to give warnings, and to offer consolations. He interpreted present history in its causes and effects. With that insight and foresight which are characteristic of a man taught of God, he enforced the lessons of present duty, or sharpened the accent of warning by pointing to the future. He beheld the elements of good and of evil at work and traced them to their final issues, and thus became a "herald of inexorable judgment based on the demands of absolute righteousness."

In the fulfillment of this task the prophets often uttered predictions, some of them of far-reaching and world-wide importance. Indeed we are told in Deut. 18 : 21, 22, that the divinely appointed test of a prophet was the fulfillment of his predictions, and Isaiah challenges idol worshippers to this proof of the ability of their deity, and boldly declares that God alone has the power to foretell the future. Prediction was thus the prophet's credential, as miracles were, in part at least, the credentials of our Saviour (John 5 : 36) ; but just as miracles, though proofs of his authority, did not constitute Christ's chief mission, so prediction was not the prophet's only or chief function. Some of the greatest of the prophets, who were most worthy of the name, uttered no predictions of great moment, but confined their teachings wholly to the present.

Even the test of the fulfillment of predictions was not to be pushed to an extreme, because it was always understood that blessing and punishment were conditional, and every promise and warning "implied an unless." Jonah foretold

the destruction of Nineveh ; but Nineveh was spared because it repented. Micah foretold the destruction of Zion and the desolation of the temple mount ; but the repentance of Hezekiah averted the doom. In fact, God himself, by the mouth of Jeremiah, lays down the broad rule for all such cases : "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and pull down and to destroy it ; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it ; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them" (18 : 7-10).

Having examined briefly the prophet's function, we must ascertain the relation of prophet and priest. The priests formed the other great body of spiritual teachers, appointed to their office by Jehovah. What relation did these two orders of teachers have toward each other ?

Prophets were related to priests, as an entirely independent body, though some of them, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, were of priestly origin. They were not only independent of the priests, but very often in deadly antagonism to them.

The priesthood had been originally the teachers of the people in things spiritual. Rite and ceremony, feast and fast, sacrifice and offering, were the ever-recurring features of a divinely appointed system of training and instruction by means of type and symbol. To the priests was also committed the task of direct instruction in the law of God (Lev. 10 : 11), but they became absorbed in the mere externals of their office and forgot the more spiritual portion of their work. They yielded to what has been the temptation of an established order in every age, the spirit of formalism, a mere external service. Under these circum-

stances a new set of teachers was demanded and appeared upon the scene. When ceremony stiffened into formalism, when the lips of the priest ceased to impart instruction, the prophet arose to bear witness to the truth and to express the real significance of ceremonial rites, which without such interpretation were worse than useless.

Samuel, the great reformer of the priesthood, was also the founder of the prophetic order. There had been prophets before his day, but he gave to them an organization and a position they had not before possessed. He established schools of the prophets, whose exact aim and purpose, however, it is impossible to discover with the information at hand.

We have borrowed this ancient title for our schools where ministers are trained, but it is not likely that there was much resemblance between those communities and our seminaries. Some have supposed that the promising young men of the nation were trained in these schools in the interpretation of the law and in music and in sacred poetry. If that was the case, they were indeed very much like our theological seminaries; but except that they practised music (see 1 Sam. 10 : 5), all is pure conjecture concerning their employment.

As the attendants upon these schools appear to have been very numerous, while the famous prophets were few in number, we see that all who belonged to the prophetic order did not also possess the distinctive prophetic gift.

Perhaps all were taught and trained for the office, but it was only the divine call and equipment that could fully endow a prophet for his special work. That call was given and that equipment bestowed only upon a few out of the many who had been trained in these prophetic schools. Whether the greater prophets generally came from such colleges we do not know. Their existence can be proved only

in the days of Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha. But the words of Amos : "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son" (7 : 14), would seem to indicate that God in calling him directly from the herd to the prophetic task, had proceeded in an unusual way. But whether called from prophetic college, priesthood, or some secular calling, it was ever the inspiration of the Most High that fitted him for his peculiar task. Without that the training and discipline of schools, whether prophetic or secular, would have been of little value.

We are now prepared to sum up in conclusion the distinguishing features of the prophetic office. The prophet was called by the voice of God to teach the men of his day the principles of a righteous life ; he was to be God's mouth-piece to them, interpreting his will and ways. In the performance of this task he uttered predictions, some of which have come to be the most precious legacy of those times to the world. He was not subordinate to the priests or any other human authority, but independent of and above all other earthly powers, as the direct ambassador of the Almighty. He came as an authorized messenger of Jehovah, and the astonished people listened, even when they did not heed.

SUMMARY.

Prophet, in modern speech. Its broader significance formerly. The three Hebrew terms. The Greek term in the Septuagint. The prophet's function, as indicated in the words God uses to Moses, and in the various sketches of his mission. Predictions the prophet's credentials. Predictions always conditional. Relation of prophet and priest. Schools of the prophets. Conclusion.

CHAPTER II

THE INFLUENCE OF THE PROPHETS

FROM their position as inspired interpreters of the divine will, the prophets became the most conspicuous and the most remarkable teachers of the nation in things spiritual. While the entire body of priests seem at times to have become mere functionaries, and many of them to have sunk into open vice and profligacy (comp. 1 Sam. 2 : 12, 22), the prophets ever maintained a lofty and noble temper, even in the most degenerate days. They exhibited constantly a boldness and a faith such as the world has rarely, if ever, seen elsewhere. To be sure they were men, and displayed at times the weaknesses and inconsistencies of humanity.

As there was among Christ's apostles a Peter, with a tendency toward weakness and vacillation, a Thomas, given to unreasonable doubts, and even a Judas, who was an utter villain and traitor, so we have among the prophets the spectacle of an Elijah, fleeing from duty before the threats of an enraged woman, and a Jonah, exhibiting at one time a most inexcusable spirit of disobedience, at another a most hateful temper of intolerance and severity, while in earlier times we have a sad story of prophetic weakness and its tragic punishment in 1 Kings 13. These were the infirmities and failings of men who were undoubted prophets of the Lord.

There was also a host of men, bearing the noble name of prophet, who were the merest time-servers and hangers-on at court. Some of these men were regarded in their day as great and influential prophets of Jehovah, and were in far higher favor than the genuine servants of God who opposed

them. Therefore, in speaking of the lofty character of the prophets, we must not suppose any of them to have been flawless and perfect, nor forget the multitude of unworthy men who bore their name, but did not possess their character or fulfill their mission of heroic, self-denying service.

Of the true prophets of God, the men who have been recognized and approved by after ages as the genuine servants of Jehovah, we may fairly say that such a body of bold, uncompromising, fearless, spiritually minded men, has never been seen in history elsewhere.

They lived above the plane of the national life at all times; they seem not to have shared the special weaknesses and temptations of their contemporaries; they never wavered between Jehovah and idols; and in the most unspiritual times they were distinguished by lofty spirituality, in the most profligate times by the purest morality, in times of national apostasy by the most unwavering faith in and loyalty to God, and in times of utter despair and gloom for the brightest and most inextinguishable spirit of hopefulness.

These true prophets of Jehovah performed a more varied and important service for the nation than any single body of men has ever been charged with elsewhere. Services that have usually been divided among various agencies were combined in the office of an ancient prophet of Israel.

1. The prophets were the moral teachers of their day. They withstood kings and people alike in their advocacy of the right. Sometimes they championed the cause of the people against their oppressors, but oftenest they were compelled to face kings, priests, and people, all together.

Though often tribunes of the people, they never became demagogues, but rebuked the follies and vices of the lowly as severely as the oppressions of the nobles or the corruptions of the priesthood. The words of the Lord to one of

the greatest of their number may be taken as a type of his demands upon them all :

“Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee : be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee ; but they shall not prevail against thee ; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee” (Jer. 1 : 17-19).

2. They were extraordinary but authorized interpreters of the meaning of the law. They took from the hands of the priests a function which that class had utterly neglected. They taught what the priests had seldom if ever understood. They explained the spiritual significance of rite and ceremony.

They put the letter into its proper place as subordinate, “for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Cor. 3 : 6). This spiritual significance, which lies hidden within all divinely appointed forms, the prophets constantly exalted, and thus became the most important teachers of the nation in that course of spiritual discipline through which it was passing. Had the teaching of the law remained in the hands of the priests, where it was originally placed, there would have been no progress in its interpretation. In charge of the prophets, on the other hand, it received an ever-increasing emphasis upon its spiritual and symbolic significance. Thus Isaiah teaches the true meaning of a fast (58 : 3-7), Micah (6 : 6-8) and Hosea (6 : 6) show how much superior is obedience to the most costly sacrifices, while Malachi (2 : 1-11) sharply reproves the priests for their neglect of duty, and reminds them that the life must be pure if the teacher would win respect for his teachings. Such an independent and fearless exposition of the law and its demands must have enraged the nar-

row formalists whose whole conception of duty consisted in the exact fulfillment of the letter, but such instruction was of incalculable service in the training of the nation and in developing a spirit of true obedience.

3. They were the statesmen of their day. They discussed not only the internal affairs of the nation, but its external relations, and were often influential advisers of kings in matters of State.

They studied the political movements around the entire horizon, and almost every prophetic book contains a more or less extensive survey of the world at large, and predicts the future destinies of neighboring nations. They exhibited greater wisdom and sagacity than most statesmen have shown in their understanding and enforcement of

What makes a nation great, and keeps it so;
What ruins kingdoms, and lays cities flat.

4. They were the principal historians of the nation. Not only do the prophetic books contain a large amount of history, but it is probable that the prophets were the authors of the chief historical books.

The Jews call the earlier histories "The Former Prophets," as if in recognition of their prophetic authorship, and Josephus declares that the only historians in Israel were prophets. This opinion of his is not probably entirely true, since we have reason to believe that some of the books were of priestly authorship, but it undoubtedly rests upon the fact that the prophets were the principal historians. In their own acknowledged writings they deal largely with historical matters, and exhibit great familiarity with the past history of their own and other nations. They also reveal the earliest conception to be found in literature of a philosophy of history, and that philosophy is founded on the only true basis, moral righteousness. They saw clearly what undermines the foundations of national pros-

perity, and they denounced with unsparing boldness and fidelity every form of vice and corruption, the oppressions and exactions of the powerful, and the luxury and vanity of the rich. No history was ever written elsewhere in such a lofty spirit and with such uncompromising fidelity to truth and righteousness.

5. They were the national poets.

They did not utter their teachings in a rude and inartistic fashion. They did not burst forth in wild incoherent sayings, like the soothsayers and diviners of other nations. There was the calmness of conscious power and authority, and the skill of highest and purest art in their teachings. Most of their utterances take the form of poetry, and many of them are poems of exquisite beauty and finish, flawless works of art. Their thoughts move in polished periods and rhythmical sentences that conform to the severest canons of criticism. Their words therefore dropped deep into the hearts of the people on account of their poetical beauty, even when their significance was but imperfectly understood. The people could not easily forget words of such marvelous sweetness and grace, wrought into poems of such matchless excellence. We can scarcely estimate the value of such words, in which the highest spiritual thought was couched in most musical speech, for keeping alive the flame of national feeling and filling the people's hearts with imperishable hopes in times of national disaster and despair.

6. Lastly, the prophets were heralds of Christ, not all of them in words, but all of them in spirit and in teaching. The hope of a Messiah had been early instilled into the nation's heart, but it was the prophets who fanned the spark into a bright and clear flame.

It is remarkable with what unanimity they pointed forward to a better and brighter day in which a prince of the house of David should reign in righteousness and

equity. That this hope should have existed in Judah, which always remained true to David's line, is not so strange, but we are startled by finding the same hope as clearly expressed by the great prophet of the Northern nation, Hosea. "Afterward," he says, "shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days" (3 : 5). So far as we know, the people of Israel had no share in any such expectation. They broke away from David's grandson, Rehoboam, without any apparent reluctance, and during all the years of their national existence, exhibited not the slightest inclination to return to their former allegiance. And yet we here have their one great prophet, a man of intense patriotism, clearly teaching the reunion of the two separated kingdoms under one head, and that a prince of the house of David. From this expectation the prophets never depart. They never waver or hesitate about it.

If it was a mere human hope, we should expect it to waver and flicker, to burn dim at one time and flare up brightly at other times, perhaps even to change slightly its character and terms. But from first to last there is not the slightest wavering or uncertainty about this Messianic expectation. It is the one hope that is never obscured. When the prospect is so dark that the prophet has nothing but denunciation and warnings, when he feels it his duty to quench the false hopes of his countrymen, he always sees lighting up the sky in the more distant future this dawn of the Messianic age. How can this unanimity and constancy to one distinct ideal through so many centuries be explained? Is not the divine commission of the prophet the only adequate explanation of so strange and unnatural a phenomenon?

The portrait of the Messiah is painted by only one prophet with any degree of distinctness. Other prophets content themselves with naming his lineage and his righteous character in general terms, but Isaiah has drawn us two beautiful portraits of him.

One presents him as the victorious and perfect Ruler (chap. 11), the other as the suffering Redeemer (chap. 53). These two prophecies are not inconsistent, though they are distinct conceptions, and the ancient Jews and many modern critics have not been able to reconcile them. Besides these two pictures Isaiah has referred to Christ more than all the other prophets put together. Hosea has simply predicted his reign, and Amos has said that the fallen tabernacle of David should be restored (9 : 11), but on Isaiah's pages we see this wonderful future Deliverer appearing again and again in his characteristic attributes and offices.

No subsequent prophet adds anything essential to the image presented by the great evangelical prophet, though some of them add interesting details about his life and career.

Thus Micah declares Bethlehem to be his birthplace (5 : 2) ; Daniel gives him the name he best loved to be known by in his lifetime, Son of Man (7 : 13) ; Zechariah describes his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (9 : 9) ; Haggai fixes the period of his coming as in the time of the second temple (2 : 7) ; while Malachi predicts the suddenness of his advent (3 : 1), and the appearance of John the Baptist "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (4 : 5 compared with Luke 1 : 17) as his forerunner.

We have not illustrated every feature of prophetic influence and activity, but have presented the most salient. In conclusion, the prophets were not always nor even generally successful from the standpoint of their own age.

They struggled heroically, but vainly, against the growing degeneracy of the times. Each prophet entered upon his work to find his task apparently harder and more hopeless than was the mission of his predecessors. The most tender entreaties and the most bitter denunciations had alike failed to bring the nation to its senses. Tears and threats

fell equally unheeded on the nation's stubborn conscience. False prophets and worldly priests conspired to render his task a failure, for they confused the people's minds with antagonistic teachings. As in all ages so then the worldly and the skeptical had an excuse for disobedience in the conflicting voices of their public teachers.

In view of the general disregard and contempt for their warnings and admonitions, the fidelity of the prophets to God in such unpleasant duty, sealing as they sometimes did their testimony with their blood, is simply sublime, and deserves, as it has received, the admiration and approval of all the good. To them the words of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews may be applied above all others in that noble company of the heroes of faith : "of whom the world was not worthy" (11 : 38).

SUMMARY.

Boldness and faith of the prophets. Not without defects. False prophets. The sphere of their influence: they were (1) moral teachers ; (2) interpreters of the law ; (3) statesmen ; (4) historians ; (5) poets ; (6) heralds of Christ. Isaiah's special contributions to Messianic predictions. The noble fidelity of the prophets amid discouraging surroundings.

CHAPTER III

THE PROPHETS AS AUTHORS

THE prophets were not originally writers, but speakers. Some of the greatest and most influential of them have not left us a single written word. They were simply "voices" crying in the wilderness, like the last and one of the greatest of them all—splendid voices indeed, commanding attention and admiration, but making no effort to perpetuate their influence.

They came forth to meet present emergencies; the Spirit of God was upon them and they "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"; but when they had accomplished their mission, they were content to vanish from the scene, and allow their mantles to fall upon other shoulders and their work into other hands.

This, we may say, was in general the character of the earlier prophets, who were men of speech and action; speakers, not writers, orators, not poets.

Many are mentioned in the books of Kings and Chronicles, who in their day exerted great and powerful influence, but are to us mere shadowy names, because no record of their words has been preserved. Such were Gad, Iddo, Hanani, and others.

But among those who never wrote were some whose characteristic traits and peculiarities are well known to us. They are not mere shadowy names, but stand forth with a clearly marked individuality upon the page of history, and are upon the whole the best known of all prophetic figures. Elijah and Elisha in the Old Testament, and John the Bap-

tist in the New, are the most conspicuous examples of this class. They owe their position not to mere words, but to great deeds and to their striking personal traits, which the historian could not permit to suffer an eclipse. They were too closely bound up with the history of their times, and their characters were too great and original to sink into obscurity.

But in the course of time a change came over the spirit of the prophets. They were no longer content to speak and allow their words to be forgotten, or to trust them to the uncertain chronicler of the times. The prophet began to record his own inspired utterances, and the great prophets of later days were all authors as well as speakers. They sought to preserve a record of the words uttered by them at the command of the Most High, though perhaps the written were often more elaborate and ornate than the spoken words. They were thus enabled to reach a wider audience and exert a more lasting and powerful influence.

This process seems to have begun with Amos or Joel, whichever of these two is the earlier prophet. The example, once set, was followed by all subsequent prophets. Jeremiah, although one of the latest, gives us a clearer view than any other of the way in which a prophetic work assumed its present shape.

From his thirty-sixth chapter we learn that after he had been preaching twenty-two years, God commanded him to write down all the words he had spoken unto him from the first concerning Israel, Judah, and the various nations. We therefore assume that up to this time no record had been kept of his words. Baruch now records them for him, however, and the roll is read first in the ears of the people and then in the presence of the king. The king in furious rage destroys the manuscript, but God commands Jeremiah to rewrite it, which he does, adding besides "many like

words." This last notice shows how freely the prophets worked up their material into its final literary form.

In a similar way, probably, Amos, after his return to his peaceful home in Tekoa, reduced to writing the prophecies uttered by him against the Northern kingdom and undoubtedly imparted to them a more perfect finish. So Isaiah, Ezekiel, and others, wrought out their various deliverances into a connected and harmonious whole. Some exhibited greater skill in dovetailing the various prophecies together, and produced a more artistic result than others. But all of them have left us works of imperishable value.

The splendid words uttered in the ears of Israel and Judah, which otherwise would very largely have perished, were committed to the more sure and enduring medium of the inscribed page, and there grew up in this way that rich and noble collection of prophetic books, which is the crowning glory of the Old Testament, and distinguishes the literature of Palestine above the literatures of all other nations of the past.

Abundant as are the remains of this literature, it is possible that originally it was more voluminous still. How many a noble exhortation, uttered by prophetic lips, may have passed into oblivion we cannot tell. We have the remains of the writings of only sixteen prophets, while history mentions the names of many more, famous in their day, some of whom we know to have written works now no longer in existence. The book of Nathan the prophet, the prophecy of Abijah the Shilonite, and the visions of Iddo the seer, are mentioned in 2 Chron. 9 : 29, but no one of them has come down to us as a separate production, although they may all have been incorporated in part into the existing Scriptures.

It is incredible that all the writings of the prophets should have been preserved to us, when we remember the chances to which all literature is exposed, and from which prophecy could be no more exempt than the historical books, large portions of which have been lost. The Bible is but part of a larger library of Hebrew literature.

The remark of a great historian that "There is at the back of the existing remains an extensive literature of which there have been preserved to us but, as it were, a few blossoms from a large tree," is undoubtedly an exaggeration. Yet we cannot believe that we have in the existing books all that the mind of historian, psalmist, and prophet produced through the centuries of Israel's history. What has been preserved has not been due to chance, but to Providence. Chance would have been as likely to preserve the least valuable as the most valuable; but God's providence, by a law of divine selection, caused the survival of that which was fittest to instruct the world in righteousness.

While the works of some of these prophets have evidently come down to us intact, it is a question in the case of others whether we have them in their original form.

Some critics suppose that the prophecies of Daniel have been made more definite and distinct and brought into closer correspondence with history by later hands; that the last six chapters of Zechariah have been incorporated into his book from another prophecy; and that Isaiah consists of two independent books, and perhaps several other fragments, which have been welded together into a single volume. The more radical and destructive critics have carried out this process of disintegration until they have cut to pieces nearly every prophetic book, have made even so small a work as Micah's to consist of half a dozen different fragments blended together, and have discovered interpolations, additions, and corrections everywhere.

We shall in the following pages pass silently over many of these criticisms, because we do not believe them worthy of notice, but the cases of Isaiah, Daniel, and Zechariah are discussed in the proper place. Here we need only remind the reader that such questions are purely critical, not religious, and that scholars alone are competent to decide them.

Whether scholars ever will settle them is extremely doubt-

ful. There seems no reason to suppose that those who now disagree so thoroughly will ever see with the same eyes. One man reads a set of facts and interprets them ; another reads the same facts and gives them an entirely different interpretation. This inability to see facts in the same light will probably continue to the end of time.

But the question of inspiration belongs to an entirely different sphere. No scholar can settle that by critical methods. His criticism does not touch that question at all. If a man sees God in nature, he does it by faith. He never discovers him by science. He believes that God is, and he wants no other proof than that he does believe. If a man sees God in the Bible, he does it by faith. The scientific investigator discovers nothing in nature to force a believer to doubt the existence of God, and the higher critic finds nothing in the Bible to make a believer distrust it as the work of God. What one critic says of the influence of the Pentateuch over the candid mind may be said with equal truth of the prophets : " Every one who so reads the Pentateuch as to allow its contents to work upon his spirit must receive the impression that a consciousness of God, such as is here expressed, cannot be derived from flesh and blood."

The prophetic books, together with the rest of the Old Testament, were edited by Ezra and the Great Synagogue. Of course the works subsequent to Ezra's time were incorporated later into the canon. But Ezra and his colleagues arranged the books substantially as we now have them.

In determining the order of the prophets, chronology seems to have exercised only a minor influence, the length and importance of a book being chiefly considered. Thus Isaiah is placed first, not because he was the earliest, but because he was regarded then as now as the greatest pro-

phetical writer. Jeremiah comes next, and then Ezekiel,¹ not because they were next in time, but in importance. In the Minor Prophets some critics believe we have the order of time, and it appears as if chronology had exercised a more decisive influence there ; but we cannot allow the date of these prophets to be wholly determined by their position, because it is pretty certain from internal evidence that Joel is the earliest of them all, while Obadiah surely is later than Micah. The Hebrew order of the prophets has not been retained either in the Greek translation of the Alexandrian scholars or in the English Bible. The Hebrew order omits Daniel from the prophets and relegates him to the so-called "holy writings" (*hagiographa*) at the end of the Old Testament, while the Greek order begins with Hosea, and continues Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel.

It would be a great advantage if we could ascertain the true chronological order and arrange the books in that way. The present arrangement gives very false impressions. The ordinary reader of the Bible cannot help thinking Isaiah the most ancient prophet, because he comes first ; and even the scholar, who knows better, finds nevertheless that the arrangement which is continually appealing to his eye, disturbs and confuses the true relation of these books. He must stop and think, and draw entirely upon his memory for the chronological arrangement, whereas if the books were placed before the eye in the order of time, or as near it as we can arrange them, the memory would scarcely be needed. The eye would make the relation of the books as easy of remembrance as the order of the letters of the alphabet.

The prophets could be read much more intelligently if arranged chronologically. Now we read, for instance, in Isaiah about the destruction of Samaria ; and in Jeremiah about the destruction of Jerusalem ; and in Ezekiel about the exile in Babylon ; and then, passing over in Daniel the

¹ The book of Ezekiel is the longest of all the prophets, Jeremiah next, and Isaiah third.

account of his experiences in the land of Babylon, we find ourselves in Hosea listening to the awful catalogue of Samaria's sins and to the prophecy of her coming doom ; while Judah is complimented for her loyalty to Jehovah and warned not to follow Israel's example.

All this is confusing ; but with a proper arrangement the confusion would be avoided and the course of events would become clear and intelligible. In Hosea and Amos we should first of all see Israel warned and threatened ; in Isaiah we should hear the warning voice speaking for the last time to her ; and then our attention would become wholly fixed upon Judah. Her sins are portrayed in Isaiah and Micah, her destruction is threatened, and the deliverance of her exiles from captivity foretold. Jeremiah takes up the strain and predicts the length of the Babylonian exile, and Ezekiel counsels and comforts the people now in captivity. With Haggai and Zechariah we have the people back again in their own land, rebuilding their city and temple, and Malachi closes the long line of prophets with remonstrances and promises. Besides these prophets who mark the critical periods of the nation's history, we have others, like Joel, Jonah, Obadiah, etc., dealing with single events, and these should be placed as far as possible in their historical order.

In this way we should have clearly portrayed the gradual growth of the evils against which the prophets contended. We should understand the nature of the task on which each prophet entered, and see how he confronted new forms of sin and ever-increasing wickedness. At first we find Israel disloyal to Jehovah, and Judah as yet almost uncontaminated. Then Judah becomes infected and at last surpasses her sister nation in wickedness. The growth of the outside powers that threaten Israel and Judah becomes also plain and intelligible. At first we hear of foes that are unnamed. Then the name of Assyria appears, then of Babylon, then of the Medes. One by one these empires disappear, and the

prophets exult over their approaching downfall, while gradually there grows up amid the pictures of ruined nations the outlines of the kingdom of God, which is to succeed and to supplant all worldly powers and extend until it fills all the earth.

We must admit that an exact chronological arrangement is impossible. There will be differences of opinion as to the period of this and that writer. Any order we may follow must be regarded as merely approximate. In the following pages we adopt a fourfold division of the prophets, taking for our dividing lines, the fall of Samaria, the fall of Jerusalem, and the return from exile. Thus we have (1) prophets before the fall of Samaria, (2) prophets before the fall of Jerusalem, (3) prophets of the exile, (4) prophets after the return.

It is impossible to make an exact division of the prophets into these four periods, because they often overlap the dividing lines. Thus, Isaiah labored both before and after the fall of Samaria, and Jeremiah before and after the destruction of Jerusalem. As, however, Isaiah's chief labors came after the capture of the Northern capital, we place him in the second division, and as Jeremiah's special work preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, we place him too in the same division, although he belongs also among the prophets of the exile. The dates of several of the minor prophets are very uncertain, and whatever arrangement we may make of them is problematical.

SUMMARY.

Earliest prophets speakers, not writers. The change which took place and the probable reason for it. Jeremiah's account of the way in which he was led to write. It is probable that in the prophets we have only the remains of a still larger literature. The integrity of the prophetic books. This is a critical, not a

religious question. Who arranged the order of books, and on what principle? The Hebrew order slightly different from ours. The confusion produced by the present order, and the desirability of a chronological arrangement. An exact chronological order impossible. The arrangement adopted in this book.

CHAPTER IV

THE INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY

THE prophets may almost be said to have been discovered in our days. A truer conception of their mission has now appeared. Once they were looked upon as almost exclusively engaged in predicting future events. Their still more important function as teachers of their own times in moral righteousness was almost entirely overlooked. They were thus seen in a false light. They held no close and intimate relationship to their own times. Their words were of great value in volumes on the evidences of Christianity. The argument from prophecy was regarded as one of the strongest proofs of supernatural religion. But as part and parcel of their national history, the prophets' utterances were very imperfectly understood or appreciated. The service performed by the prophets for their own generation was supposed to be chiefly that of inspiring the nation with the imperishable hopes of the future. They were engaged in reading history before it was made. Even so great a writer as Butler, of the *Analogy*, describes prophecy as history written beforehand.

A much more reasonable view has come into vogue. The prophet is no longer torn away from his own historical environment. He is seen to have been, above all things, a man of his own times, intensely interested in passing events and uttering words of the most immediate and practical importance. He was engaged principally in instructing the men of his own day in the claims of God upon

them. He served his own generation, as every true man has done.

In the fulfillment of that task he did indeed continually look forward into the future. He saw the outcome and fruitage of present tendencies. He predicted the evils that would follow disobedience and the blessings that waited upon obedience. But the future on which his eye was fixed was almost always that immediate future on whose verge he was then standing. Just below the horizon, but ready to emerge into view, were the good and evil consequences of present action.

Many of these prophetic utterances were not fulfilled for centuries, some of them have not yet been accomplished ; but it would be wrong to suppose that the prophet was himself aware how far down the future these coming events would be. The element of time does not, as a rule, form any part of prophecy. The prophet sees what is to be, without any historical perspective. As in looking at distant mountains, the nearer and remoter peaks are so blended together as to seem to form one continuous wavy outline, although really hundreds of miles apart, so to inspired men the intervals of time between distant events were not perceptible. They saw the true succession of historical occurrences, but not the long intervening spaces.

In the New Testament we have actual proof of the truth of this statement. We find the apostles evidently expecting the Lord's second coming in their own generation.

One cannot read their writings without perceiving how manifestly this expectation has colored their language. Paul's words, "The Lord is at hand," and John's prayer, "Even so, come Lord Jesus," are instances. None of the apostles, however, distinctly taught the nearness of Christ's return to earth, and indeed they could not have done so without exceeding their authority, for our Lord himself, in

Acts 1:7, expressly declared that the time of his coming was not to be revealed even to inspired apostles.

In like manner we must suppose that the prophets in predicting the future knew nothing of "the times or the seasons." They could not tell whether the events they foresaw were near or remote.

Sometimes, as in Jeremiah's prediction of the restoration, the element of time was actually a factor in the prophecy. But ordinarily the prophet roughly sketches the future without reference to dates. He could not see how far away were the events that were outlined in such dim and shadowy forms. He undoubtedly supposed them to be much nearer to his own times than many of them have since proved to have been. If, in the course of time, history has revealed the very remote reference of his words, it simply proves that, like Job, he uttered things that he understood not, things too wonderful for him, which he knew not (Job. 42 : 3).

As little children lisp and tell of heaven,
So thoughts beyond their thoughts to those high bards were given.

In accordance with this view of the prophet's functions, we offer a few simple rules for the correct interpretation of prophecy.

1. Every prophecy should be read in the light of its historical setting.

Much has been done toward clearing up the history of those ancient times. Historians of great learning have investigated Israel's past, traced out the course of events, and revealed the various agencies at work in molding and shaping the nation's history. Archæology has deciphered ancient inscriptions and thrown great light upon the tangled web of affairs. Linguists have studied the meaning of words, and enabled us to understand our Hebrew Bibles as no past age did. All this light of science and investigation

must be thrown upon prophecy if we would use our best efforts in its interpretation.

And when we have found the prophet's place in the past, and have learned the features of his environment, we must interpret his teachings by them. We must look for the reasons of his utterances in the state of affairs about him. For he would have been a poor and unsatisfactory teacher for his times if he had uttered words wholly without reference to the then present issues.

Much injustice has been done the prophets and great misinterpretation put upon their words by tearing them away from their historical standpoint.

Even so judicious a commentator as Henderson,¹ for instance, supposes the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus and the dissolution of the Jewish polity to be predicted in the closing chapters of Zechariah. But of what use would such a prophecy be to the men of his day? Wherein would it have possessed fitness or appropriateness? The city was already in ruins, the temple destroyed, and Zechariah, with his older colleague, Haggai, had been commissioned to encourage the people to rebuild both city and temple. The probability is, as Mede argued long ago, that these chapters are from the hand of an earlier prophet, and describe the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. "For," he asks, "was this a fit time to foretell the destruction of both" (*i. e.*, Jerusalem and the temple) "while they were but yet a-building?" The consideration of historical probability would favor the view of an earlier author. At any rate, it can hardly be probable that Zechariah or any other prophet of those early times would be discoursing to the people on an event as remote as the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in the first century of the Christian era.

Take again another prophecy which has become famous in the annals of religious controversy, the words in which

¹ "Commentary on the Minor Prophets."

Isaiah declares (7 : 14) that a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel. The Holy Spirit, by the pen of Matthew (1 : 22, 23), has informed us that this is a prediction of the birth of Christ. But this does not preclude the question, What did Isaiah mean by the prophecy? Reading it in the light of its historical setting, we see that it had an earlier and much more natural application. Ahaz, the king, and his people were trembling before the combined forces of Syria and Israel, like trees in the wind. Isaiah is sent of God to encourage him. Ahaz is requested to seek a sign from the Lord, but is either too disheartened or too faithless to do so. Isaiah therefore gives him a sign. Before a young child, yet to be born of one now a virgin, shall be old enough to tell the difference between good and evil, these two kings, now so much dreaded, shall be gone and Judah delivered from all fear of them. The historical circumstances therefore compel us to find the original sign in Ahaz's own day, for it was a sign given him, in respect to the invasion of Rezin and Pekah. It was a bold and striking prophecy which living men were to see fulfilled. Now this does not prevent a second and more glorious reference to Christ, and such an allusion has been divinely pointed out in the passage.

But in interpreting the prophets, while we are to pay all due heed to remoter allusions, we must remember first of all to interpret the prophet's words in the light of his own times, and ascertain, if possible, what the message meant for him and his contemporaries.

That meaning may not be the most important. Later ages may have shown us larger suggestions in his words than even he dreamed of. The prophet may himself often have been mistaken in his expectations. If they had beheld the fulfillment of their own predictions, they would doubtless have been filled with surprise at the strange and unexpected ways in which God had wrought out the prophecies of their lips.

Peter plainly teaches that inspired teachers did not fully understand the import of their message, but searched "what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1 : 11).

Vainly they tried the deeps to sound
Even of their own prophetic thought,
When of Christ crucified and crown'd
His Spirit in them taught.

The Holy Spirit meant much more than the prophets understood, and so it has come to pass that some later and larger fulfillment is the only one we care about. This, however, should not blind us to the fact that there may have been an earlier and more immediate application, and this we can ascertain only by setting each prophecy, with painstaking care, in its proper historical framework.

2. A second rule is to look for general rather than minute and circumstantial fulfillments of prophecy.

If God had chosen by the mouth of his servants to give the most definite and circumstantial forecast of future events, he could have done so. In the visions of Daniel, if we may regard them as predictions in the strict sense, we have such a minute outline of future history. There are also many single predictions scattered through the Old Testament in which events are foretold with great distinctness and definiteness. Thus, Elijah declared that the dogs should lick Ahab's blood in the very place where they had licked the blood of Naboth ; Isaiah promised Hezekiah fifteen additional years to his life, and foretold the very name of Cyrus centuries before he was born ; while Micah pronounced Bethlehem to be the destined birthplace of the Messiah. These are only specimens out of a large number of definite and clear predictions of future events.

But we should greatly err if we allowed the frequent cases of definite predictions to determine our idea of prophecy in general. Numerous as they are, they are still exceptions to the rule. Prophecy in general is not clear, distinct, and definite. It is a rough and inexact sketch of the future. The picture is painted in a bold, free way, and no attempt is made to be minutely accurate in all the details.

The wise interpreter will not seek to prove a perfect agreement in minor and unessential matters. The attempt to reduce the prophecies to exact historical proportions has led to much false interpretation and special pleading. Prophecy is not history written beforehand, and we must not look for the detailed circumstantiality of the chronicle in the prophet's picture of the future. We may again and again be surprised and delighted to detect in some minor detail an exact agreement between forecast and realization, but we should not be disappointed and distressed if we find history casting aside some of the drapery of the picture as unessential.

What attempts have been made to prove an agreement in every particular between Isaiah's and Ezekiel's prophecies concerning Tyre and the subsequent history of that city ! Isaiah declared that Tyre should fall and after seventy years revive, and that then all her gains would be consecrated to the service of Jehovah (chap. 23). The seventy here is not to be taken literally, but rather like Jeremiah's prediction of the seventy years' exile, as a sacred round number. Both refer to the same period, the duration of the Chaldean dominion before it was overthrown by the rising Persian power. But surely not then in the literal sense were all her merchandise and hire consecrated to Jehovah. Jerome says, "These things we do not yet find accomplished according to history." We may say that we still wait for the literal fulfillment of that prophecy ;

but is it not better to abandon the attempt to find the precision of history in such minor details?

When Tyre was at the height of its power and glory, and none could by the exercise of mere human sagacity have foreseen its ruin, for history tells us it was so strongly built that Nebuchadnezzar besieged it for thirteen years, and centuries later Alexander the Great was almost defeated in his attempt to conquer it, the prophet foresaw and predicted its fall and destruction, painting its fate in lurid colors. He foretold also its restoration, and that the people would then acknowledge Jehovah's truth and might and bring tribute to him, a prophecy that has its truth in the fact that the commerce and wealth of this world shall yet be consecrated to the service of our Lord and of his Christ. But to look for some literal rising of Tyre from her ruins to her former commercial greatness and splendor, and for the actual consecration to Jehovah's service at some future time of her gains, secured by trade with all the earth, is to press the unessential features of prophecy out of all proportion.

Ezekiel also has a notable prophecy on Tyre, in which, with great beauty of language, he pictures her as a splendid galley that has fallen into stormy seas and become wrecked, to the great grief and amazement of all beholders (chap. 26, 27). But in the midst of this forecast occur the words: "Thou shalt be built no more," which are echoed subsequently in the still stronger statement: "Though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again." What a strain has been put upon language to prove that these words have been literally fulfilled. Is it not enough to know that all the glory of ancient Tyre is gone, and that instead of being a great and splendid commercial metropolis, "a merchant of the people for many isles," she is nothing but a poor and insignificant town, without trade or influence?¹ What the prophet was anxious about was not to paint a picture so accurate that it could be subsequently verified in every particular, but to threaten this great and proud city

¹ The writer visited Tyre in March 1893, and found it a dirty little Moslem town, but scarcely such a ruinous and desolate place as described by previous travelers.

with Jehovah's wrath for its sins. And has not history amply confirmed his truth, even if the prophet's words are not literally true, that she should never be built again?

The sixty-sixth chapter of Isaiah also contains a picture that has never yet been literally fulfilled, and we may add cannot be literally fulfilled, because Christ has superseded this idea of a single sacred locality. (See John 4 : 21.)

We are not to look for a realization in which all the local coloring of the prophet shall be repeated, but for a larger and more spiritual fulfillment, in harmony with the more exalted conceptions of Christianity. In such prophecies, much of the drapery is necessarily local and temporary, and it is not the form but the idea which is essential and eternal.

3. We must make a clear distinction between exposition and application. Exposition is the discovering and unfolding of the meaning ; application is the enforcement of the lesson. Exposition must always precede application. Numberless passages of Scripture have been wrongly interpreted because men have forgotten this rule. They made the application first and the interpretation afterward, and the desired lesson produced a false exegesis. No matter how sacred any old and traditional interpretation may have become, we must be ready to abandon it at the dictates of truth. We may lose some precious old texts, but we shall gain some precious new ones ; and even if we perceive no gain accruing, we must hold the interests of truth dearer than all else.

Let us illustrate our principle by a reference to one or two well-known prophecies. In the sixty-third chapter of Isaiah, the mighty one who comes from Bozrah, with dyed garments, is, at least in popular apprehension, the Saviour redeeming the world by his sufferings and death. His

answer to the question, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel?" is interpreted as an allusion to the crucifixion. "I have trodden the winepress alone" has formed the text for many a sermon on the suffering Saviour. His stained raiment has brought to mind his blood that was poured out for man's redemption. Beautiful as is this application, and hallowed as it is by immemorial usage, it at once falls to the ground before a careful exegesis. This shows us that the winepress is not that of personal suffering, but of vengeance. The heroic stranger sprinkles his garments not with his own blood, but with the blood of his enemies. The picture is therefore not a portrait of the crucified and suffering Christ, but of the triumphant Christ, returning to take vengeance on them that know not God; and its counterpart in the New Testament is not to be found in the descriptions of Christ on Calvary, but in the nineteenth chapter of Revelation, where with "vesture dipped in blood" he smites the nations, and "treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

Another passage of the same sort is Malachi's injunction to bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that God may pour out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. The ordinary interpretation of this makes it an injunction to honor God with the fruit of our lips. How often have prayer meetings been aroused by the admonition to bring in all the tithes. Such an application of the passage may not be amiss, but it should not blind us to the fact that the prophet was speaking about something entirely different. He was urging his countrymen to bring the fruits of their farms and the gains of their business to God. Whatever other application the words may admit of, the first and truest lesson is that it is our duty to acknowledge God's sovereignty over our money and possessions. It is a text for missionary sermons rather than for prayer meetings. Its lesson is the right use of money, rather than the consecration of our lips to God.

We might adduce other illustrations of this rule, which, though too obvious to need much explanation, is often for-

gotten. But we simply repeat the suggestion, that if we would interpret prophecy, or any other scripture aright, we must first ascertain the meaning of the passage before attempting to draw any lessons from it.

4. Make a sharp distinction between the authorized interpretations of Old Testament prophecies given us in the New Testament and the unauthorized interpretations of uninspired men. Our Lord and his apostles have given us many interpretations and applications of Old Testament prophecies. Each of these is a jewel of priceless worth.

When the Holy Spirit has thus set his seal upon the meaning of a passage, there is no need of further controversy. Of course this application to the times of Christ and the church does not exclude an earlier application to the prophet's own times and needs. But the Holy Spirit has shown, by his own interpretation, that the secondary and later reference is the chief and most important application of the words.

When now we turn from these authorized interpretations to the comments of human wisdom, we enter an entirely different sphere. The whole Old Testament is full of Christ, for on the way to Emmaus our Lord brought proof-texts from Moses and all the prophets "concerning himself." (See Luke 24 : 27.) What passages, now utterly obscure and dark to us, must have leaped into light under his exposition! How many a now unperceived allusion to himself he doubtless discovered! But in the absence of all record of that wonderful Bible lesson, who of us will dare attempt to take Christ's place and point out those prophecies? We look through the Old Testament for the passages he touched upon, but we cannot be sure that we have found them. Beyond those that the Holy Spirit has pointed out by the lips and pens of inspired men, all is uncertainty. We may think we discover the golden thread of Messianic prediction flashing out here and there, but we must hold it as a matter of opinion, not of authority. Many a sermon has been preached on the scarlet thread of Rahab as pre-

figuring the blood of Christ, and when we recall the boldness and freedom with which Paul interprets Old Testament facts, it would be presumptuous to deny the possibility of such an application ; but we have no authority for it.

The boldness of Paul's use of Hebrew history does not warrant us in like freedom. We do not altogether object to such a use of Scripture when it is made reverently and with due regard to the claims of truth ; we simply claim, that all such expositions are purely "private interpretations," and that the very sharpest distinction should be made between them and the authorized comments of the Holy Spirit.

Still other rules for the right interpretation of prophecy might be added ; but perhaps these four will be sufficient to guide the reader safely, and their small number may cause them to be more easily remembered. (1) Read every prophecy in its true historical setting. (2) Expect a broad and vague outline of future events rather than minute descriptions. (3) Make first your interpretation, and secondly your application. (4) Draw rigid lines of demarcation between the applications of prophecy that have the sanction of the Holy Spirit and those which are purely "private interpretations."

SUMMARY.

The truer conception now in vogue of the prophet's mission. The prophet saw the future without perspective. History has revealed in his words more than he himself knew. Rules of interpretation in accordance with this newer and truer conception. (1) Every prophecy must be read in the light of its historical setting, and when the prophet's historical standpoint has been ascertained, we must interpret his words in harmony with it. Illustrations from Zechariah and Isaiah. This historical interpretation may be for the church less important than some secondary reference. (2) Look for general rather than minute fulfillments of

prophecy. Many definite predictions, but prophecy generally gives only a rough sketch of the future. Isaiah's and Ezekiel's predictions concerning Tyre and the former's sixty-sixth chapter. (3) Distinguish between exposition and application. Illustrations from Isaiah and Malachi. (4) Discriminate between the authorized interpretations of the Holy Spirit and the comments of uninspired wisdom. The latter justified, but have no authority.

CHAPTER V

PROPHETS OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

(Before the Fall of Samaria, 825 B. C.—722 B. C. Joel.)

THE first great prophetic figure that appears on the stage of Hebrew history is Elijah. Like his later counterpart, the forerunner of Christ, he was a hermit and recluse, who came forth from his seclusion only when burdened with some message from Jehovah. The next great prophet, Elisha, though inferior to his predecessor in grandeur of character and personal influence, still more closely resembled the Great Master in his mode of life and teaching. He was no recluse, or hermit; but was possessed of social instincts, and sought rather than shunned the society of mankind.¹

The personal characteristics of both these great prophets appear with remarkable clearness upon the page of Scripture, and with the exception of Jeremiah, none of that great brotherhood are so well known as these two. But neither of them has left a single written word, and so far as we know they never attempted to perpetuate their influence. Like John the Baptist, they were "voices crying in the wilderness," with no thought of any larger audience than that which listened to their speech.

It was, if we have correctly interpreted the facts, while the second of these great prophets of action was still on the stage that the first prophetic author arose, in the latter part of the ninth century before Christ.

¹ For a graphic description of the character and influence of these two prophets, see Stanley's "History of the Jewish Church," Vol. II., pp. 359-364.

It is worth while to fix this period clearly in mind, by seeing what was doing elsewhere in the world. At this time Homer had just ceased singing his immortal strains by the shore of the Ionian Sea ; Lycurgus, unless his existence be a pure myth, was making wise laws for the infant kingdom of Sparta ; Athens, Sparta's subsequent great rival, had not then emerged from primitive barbarism, but was inhabited by cave dwellers ; while the foundations of Rome were a hundred years farther down the centuries. At this time Herodotus, the Father of History, was still four hundred years in the future, and Plato and the Athenian dramatists farther still, while that Greek literature, which afterward filled the world with its wonderful fragrance and beauty, had only begun to blossom.

Yet at this early period, in the gray dawn of Greek culture, and before the day had broken over Rome, there began to appear from the pen of Hebrew prophets works of rarest beauty and far surpassing all profane literature in intrinsic worth. The Hebrew harp was already in perfect tune and making exquisite music before the Greek lyre had been swept by the hand of any of the great masters, except Homer and Hesiod.

In Palestine itself, the kingdom had been divided about a hundred years. Israel and Judah were no longer united, but each had its own king and government, and also possessed separate forms of religious worship. Each nation professed allegiance to Jehovah, but in the Northern kingdom the cult was more heathenish than Hebrew.

Jehovah, who in the second commandment had severely denounced the making of graven images, was now worshiped there under the form of the golden calves at Dan and Bethel, while the Phœnician god Baal, against whom Elijah had contended so splendidly and so victoriously on Mount Carmel, was still more highly honored. For a moment on Carmel the people had been convinced of Jehovah's superi-

ority ; but they soon returned to the more attractive and easy-going worship of the Phœnician deity. Jeroboam had sought by his twin sanctuaries to wean the people's hearts from Jerusalem and the temple, but he accomplished more than he had intended, and almost completely won them away from the Lord God himself. The strict, severe, and simple worship of Jehovah, in which no immorality was permitted, had no power over these pleasure-loving and lustful Israelites in comparison with the licentious rites of Baal, who was worshiped by a people noted for their skill in all the arts, and possessing in Tyre the most splendid and prosperous city of the ancient world. A deity whose worshipers were leaders in the world of commerce, trade, and art, and whose service laid no restraint upon the sinful passions of the devotee, but permitted him to indulge freely in all manner of excesses, was too attractive for the Israelites, now separated from their splendid temple and deprived of the teachings to which they had been accustomed, and the whole nation soon became apostate.

Judah, with her inestimable privilege of temple worship, and perhaps at heart a more true and loyal people, did not succumb to the fascinations of heathenism until long after Israel had vanished from the stage. In Judah too, many good kings postponed the nation's final doom, and there were, amid the growing evils and threatening dangers, periods of remarkable prosperity and of at least outward devotion to Jehovah's worship. But Israel had not one good king in all her existence, and the only public check upon the wickedness of rulers and people were the prophets, who made the Northern kingdom the chief scene of their labors until after its fall, when they concentrated their attention upon Judah, seeking at first to avert its doom, and when that was seen to be impossible, endeavoring to console the people under their calamities with the imperishable hopes of the future.

During the first centuries of their separate existence Israel was by far the larger and more prosperous nation of the two. Judah was limited in territory and weak in power compared with her northern neighbor, and at times it seemed as if she might be crushed under its very heel. In the days of Amaziah, Judah actually became, for a while at least, a tributary of the Northern kingdom; and even after Uzziah had brought the nation to such a pitch of power and prosperity we find the inhabitants of Jerusalem, in the days of his grandson, trembling like trees in the wind before the alliance of Samaria and Damascus.

But with all its power and importance the kingdom of Israel was rotten to the core, and soon became a prey when the mighty and warlike Assyrian invaded the land; while Judah, comparatively weak and defenseless, made a heroic fight for her liberties for more than a century, and had she not followed Israel's course and become apostate from Jehovah, might have continued in unbroken power and prosperity. With the awful example of Israel before her eyes she would not be instructed, and blind to her true interests, and contemptuously neglectful of her best guides, the prophets, she shut her ears against all remonstrances, continued on in her course of sin, and at last met her doom also.

In all these varying phases of the nations' history the prophets played a splendid and heroic part. Though often unheeded and still oftener disobeyed, they lifted up their voices in behalf of righteousness. They pleaded and persuaded, they warned and entreated. They never, or rarely, flinched or wavered in the path of duty. The work seemed to grow harder and harder for each incumbent of the sacred office, but no prophet refused to accept his divinely appointed task. The end came; the nation perished. Humanly speaking the prophets had failed, for they had not averted the doom of their land; but from the standpoint of all after ages they most gloriously succeeded, for character is greater than all other achieve-

ment; the man is more than his work, and the prophets exhibited a spirit of glorious manhood which has put the whole world in their debt.

Of the four earliest prophets of whom we shall treat in this and the subsequent chapter, two labored in the Northern kingdom and one in the Southern, while the third, although a prophet of Israel, appears in the book that bears his name, only in connection with his mission to the heathen city of Nineveh. Who was the first prophetic author is uncertain, but in spite of the objections of some later critics, we shall follow the commonly received opinion and place Joel at the head of the list.

The date of this prophet is very uncertain, and he has been assigned to periods as far apart as the ninth century and the fifth century B. C. Nothing is known of his personal history, except his father's name. Beyond this all is conjecture. He probably lived in Judea, since his mission was evidently to the Jews. He speaks of the priests and the temple, of Zion and Jerusalem, with evident familiarity, while he does not make the remotest allusion to the kingdom of Israel. Some have supposed him to have been a priest, but without sufficient evidence. There is nothing in his writings to supply the lack of external testimony.

Joel
about 825 B. C.

Generally the prophets refer in pointed terms to the social conditions and to the foreign relations of the people; but Joel summons his hearers to repentance without indicating any special national sins, and while various foreign nations appear on his pages, they are referred to in a colorless way that affords us no clue to the period in which he wrote.

A number of eminent scholars have assigned Joel to a date after the captivity, on the ground that the internal and

external relations of the nation as portrayed by him do not harmonize with any earlier date.

For instance, there is no king, or at least none mentioned, but only priests and elders; Assyria and Babylon, those giant monarchies that fill the entire horizon of the earlier prophets, do not appear; those old foes within the nation, the heathen idols, are no longer alluded to, while priests and people appear to be harmoniously engaged in the worship of Jehovah. Special stress is laid also on the words in 3 : 2: "My people and my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations," which seem to allude clearly to the Exile.¹

These are very important considerations, which must be taken into account in attempting to fix the date of Joel. They absolutely require either a very early date, before the nation's heart was thoroughly corrupted, or else a very late date, when the people had forever abandoned idolatry.

The later date, it must be admitted, harmonizes best with the situation described, but requiring, as it does, a complete transposition from second place to almost the last in the succession of prophets, we hesitate to adopt it, if we can find an earlier period to which the prophecy can be assigned. The order of even the Minor Prophets may not be strictly chronological, but it is evidently so nearly so, that we cannot believe it has assigned to the second place a prophet who belongs to the very closing period. Besides this, the thought and style of Joel differ widely from those of the acknowledged writers of this period.

If therefore we can find an earlier date with which the prophecy will harmonize, we are compelled to prefer it. Such a date has been found in the reign of Joash (B. C. 837-797), while the young king was still in his minority, and the reins of government were in the hands of the

¹ For fuller details, see Driver's "Introduction," pp. 287-293. Farrar's "Minor Prophets," pp. 103-112.

priest Jehoiada (2 Kings 12 ; 2 Chron. 24). Then Assyria and Chaldea had not yet loomed with fearful menace upon the nation's horizon ; idol worship had for the time been suppressed, while the youth of the king would account for the absence of all allusion to him, and for the mention of only priests and elders.

To be sure this date is not free from difficulties, the chief of which is the apparent allusion to the captivity in 3 : 1, 2 ; but it is precarious to make a single passage decisive in establishing the date of a writing, unless that passage is unambiguous, which is not the case here. Amos, who certainly wrote before the captivity, has an entirely similar strain (9 : 11-15), while he uses one of Joel's very phrases (ver. 14) that appears to allude to the Exile in the words : "I will bring back again the captivity of my people of Israel."

In view of all the facts, we are inclined therefore, following Credner and Ewald, to make Joel's book the earliest of the extant prophetic writings and to place him in the earlier portion of the reign of Joash (about 825 B. C.).

With this early date agrees the scope of his vision.

He portrays the relations of the people externally and internally in a general and indefinite way. The nation's enemies are those old-time foes, Egyptians, Philistines, and Edomites. The wrongs inflicted are those common to all wars, plunder and the enslavement of captives. The day of judgment is not some approaching invasion, as was the case with later prophets, but it is the great and notable day of the Lord. The sharp outline of the nation's sins, as they appear on the pages of subsequent writers, are lacking. Joel, as becomes the first prophetic author, glances over the whole field which his successors minutely describe.

The spiritual element, so characteristic of all the prophets, has no nobler exponent than Joel.

Fittingly does he head the list with his exalted summons, "Rend your hearts, and not your garments." That is the

"keynote of spiritual worship" for all time. Outward expressions are nothing ; the heart is everything. "With a glance that reached forward to the most distant ages, yet had immediate reference to the enlargement of the narrow views of his own time, he foretold, as the chiefest of blessings, that the day was at hand when the prophetic spirit should no longer be confined to this or that class ; but should be poured out upon all humanity, on male and female, on old and young, even on the slaves and humblest inhabitants of Jerusalem."

The proximate cause of Joel's prophecy was a twofold public calamity, not mentioned in the historical books, successive flights of locusts, extending through years, and a terrible drouth. Such a calamity had not been experienced within the nation's memory (1 : 2).

The prophet describes most graphically the nature and extent of the evil, and summons priests and people to a solemn fast (1-2 : 17) ; and then in the latter portion of his book he gives Jehovah's answer to the people's prayer (2 : 18 to the end). The last five verses of chapter two form a separate chapter in the Hebrew Bible. They constitute an undoubted Messianic prophecy, which Peter quotes on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2 : 16-21). Paul also quotes Joel (Rom. 10 : 13), while John's picture in Rev. 9 : 3-10 was evidently very largely influenced by his description of the locusts.

This account of the locusts has led to a great deal of controversy over the question, whether they are literal or figurative. Formerly it was generally held that the prophet was describing under this figure the movements of an invading army. This interpretation is now mostly abandoned, though many excellent scholars still contend for it.¹

¹ This was Dr. Hackett's view. See Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," under Joel.

Some critics have combined the allegorical and the literal, holding that the locusts were an actual scourge which pre-figured a still more dreadful human foe.

The style of Joel is clear and elegant ; his language remarkable for purity and smoothness ; his images original, bold, and varied ; while he excels in pictorial description. His picture of the movements of the invading locusts has been universally admired.

SUMMARY.

Prophets of action. Period when first prophetic author arose. State of affairs in Palestine. Contrast between Judah and Israel. The fidelity of the prophets to both kingdoms JOEL. Uncertainty about his date. Reasons for accepting a very early rather than a very late date. The scope of his prophecy. Its spiritual lesson. The occasion of the prophecy. Analysis of the book. The vexed question of the locusts. The style of Joel.

CHAPTER VI

PROPHETS OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

(Before the Fall of Samaria, 825 B. C.-722 B. C. Jonah, Amos, Hosea.)

OF the sixteen prophets whose books have come down to us, Jonah is the earliest whose date we can fix with any certainty. Joel is earlier, if our previous reasoning has been correct, but his date is a matter of pure conjecture.

Jonah
about 780 B. C.

Jonah however must have lived as early as the reign of Jeroboam II (782-741 B. C.), and probably earlier still, for he predicted the restoration of Israel's ancient boundaries, which was accomplished by that king. (See 2 Kings 14 : 25.) He therefore succeeded Elisha as a messenger of God to the ten tribes, though the chief incidents of his career are connected with his mission to the distant heathen city of Nineveh. He was a native of Gath-hepher in Lower Galilee, and thus refutes the Jewish opinion that Galilee had produced no prophet (John 7 : 52).

Whether he is the author of the book that bears his name is an open question.

Many critics assign it to another hand and to a later date, but there is no evidence, external or internal, to prove either Jonah's authorship or the reverse. All we can say is, that the character of the narrative rather favors the supposition that some one else than the prophet wrote it.

With the exception of the second chapter the book is a

simple, straightforward recital, without the slightest hint or suggestion of any hidden meaning.

Jonah, being commanded of God to visit Nineveh, then a great and famous city, and to predict its overthrow within forty days, was so frightened at this strange commission that he fled to Joppa and took ship for Tarshish, most likely a city in Spain,¹ to escape from duty. A fearful storm arose and the ship was in great peril. The sailors prayed to their heathen deities, and finding Jonah below, fast asleep, they awakened him and bade him call upon his god. Then they cast lots to determine who was the guilty person that had brought this tempest upon them, and the lot fell upon Jonah, who confessed his sin and bade them cast him into the sea. From motives of humanity they delayed doing this, until shipwreck stared them in the face, when they reluctantly obeyed the prophet's request. At once a great fish swallowed him (chap. 1). In his strange prison house Jonah prayed earnestly, and was delivered, the fish casting him out upon the shore after three days (chap. 2). Sent a second time to Nineveh, Jonah obeyed and preached, the people repented, and God mercifully spared them (chap. 3). At this Jonah grew very angry, but was effectually rebuked (chap. 4).

From the earliest times grave doubts have been felt about the historical character of this narrative, and many attempts have been made to explain away its literal import.

It has been considered a dream, an allegory, a fable, a parable. The story reads like pure history, like a simple recital of actual facts. But whether these facts are true or not is another question. They may have become so ancient before they were recorded here as to be thoroughly distorted out of all resemblance to the truth. In that case they belong to the region of myth or legend. Radical critics of course take this view, but many others are unwilling to put

¹ Tarshish was called Tartessos by the Greeks, and stood not far from the modern Gibraltar. Sayce, "The Higher Criticism and the Monuments," p. 130.

them in such an objectionable category, while unable at the same time to accept them as sober reality. Such critics often exalt the religious value of the narrative to the highest point. And we must not overlook the fact, that, putting aside all that is doubtful, the book contains some of the most beautiful and impressive lessons to be found in the Old Testament. But how is it possible to say, as one Dutch critic does, that "this story is rich in meaning if taken as a poem, though senseless enough if taken as history"? Such an utterance seems the height of folly.

The narrative is worthy of its place in the sacred canon on account of its elevated teachings, and these teachings are not destroyed, even if we consider the story invented, any more than Christ's teaching is marred by the admission that his parables were creations of his imagination. But surely that wonderful lesson of God's mercy gains in impressiveness, if the story is regarded as historical, for the following reasons :

First. The style itself is as purely historical as it is possible for words to be.

Second. The chief reason for the theory of its poetical character lies in a shrinking from the marvelous features of the narrative.

If we admit the possibility of miracles at all, we cannot see the reason for objecting to the one here. If we deny the reality of this Old Testament miracle, because it offends against our ideas of divine dignity and decorum, are we not setting up a very dangerous rule? Shall we not find it difficult to restrain ourselves from applying the same rule to Christ's miracles and so at last come to rejecting them also? If we say Christ performed nothing so strange and marvelous as this, we must remember that the miracles of the Old Testament differ widely from those of the New. There is in the former less of spiritual teaching and more of physical marvelousness, as suited to that earlier stage of religious

development. They are on a colossal scale, in order to impress the childlike imagination of that early period.

That it was not impossible for a great fish to swallow a man has been amply proved.¹ With respect to the possibility of a man's living in such a place, we must say with the Jewish commentator, Abenezra: "No man has the power of living in the bowels of a fish for a single hour, how much less for such a number of hours, except by the operation of a miracle."

Third. Christ's treatment of the book of Jonah seems scarcely consistent with the theory of its fictitious character.

We do not believe it wise to make Christ's use of the Old Testament decisive in settling questions of biblical criticism, because we do not know that he spoke as a critic. He does not necessarily prove the historical truth of the narrative about the whale by his reference in Matt. 12 : 40 : "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly ; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Whether this account be poetical or literal, Christ's allusion to it would be equally pertinent. But can the same be said of the next words (ver. 41) : "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it : because they repented at the preaching of Jonas ; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." Surely this reference would not be appropriate if that ancient story were fiction. How could the imaginary repentance of the Ninevites rebuke the actual unrepentance of Christ's hearers? Jesus himself must have believed the story true to make such a use of it. We may say, that even he could only acquire critical learning as others do by study and investigation, and that he spoke as he did because, like his countrymen, he ignorantly accepted the narrative, not because it was necessarily historical. But we think that

¹ A man, encased in armor, has been found in the stomach of an immense shark.

few will accept such a limitation of Christ's knowledge, and so far as he is concerned, we are driven by these words of his to believe that he held the story to have been actually true. And his reference to this event reveals an entirely different state of mind from that of the critic, who declares that in addition to the miracle of the fish, the book contains in the immediate and universal repentance of the Ninevites a proof of its unhistorical character. Christ did not think it impossible that such an event could have occurred, and with all his sobriety he evidently found it no such stumbling-block as many a Christian has found it.

Great injustice has been done the book of Jonah by the controversies that have arisen over its marvelous features, in withdrawing attention from its wonderfully beautiful spiritual lessons.

Bleek says that "in no book of the Old Testament is the all-embracing fatherly love of God, which has no respect for person or nation, but is moved to mercy on all who turn to him, exhibited with equal impressiveness, or in a manner so nearly approaching the spirit of Christianity."

While it is evident that the book has a deep moral and spiritual purpose, opinions vary greatly as to its precise aim.

According to some it is to teach that prediction is conditional, and that even a divinely inspired threat may be averted by repentance. Others hold its teaching to be, that only true fear and repentance can bring salvation, as exemplified in the case of the sailors, of Jonah himself, and later of the Ninevites. Driver believes "the real design of the narrative is to teach, in opposition to the narrow, exclusive view which was too apt to be popular with the Jews, that God's purposes of grace are not limited to Israel alone, but that they are open to the heathen as well, if only they abandon their sinful courses and turn to him in true penitence."

We do not see why we should limit the teaching of the book to any one special aim, since more than one lesson is forcibly taught in it. But towering above all its other rich and instructive suggestions are, first, the contrast between man and God, as revealed in Jehovah's mercy toward the repentant Ninevites and Jonah's anger at the same—a picture that seems to anticipate the contrast of the father and the elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son ; and, second, the implied difference between the Ninevites, who repented at one single prophetic message, and Israel, who listened to prophet after prophet, and only grew harder.

This is the very lesson of the story that Christ emphasizes in Matt. 12 : 41. That which was true of Christ's hearers, that they were listening to a greater than Jonah, was in a less degree true of the nation, which had heard in many a prophet a greater than Jonah, and yet continued stubborn and unrepentant. This prophet, the least of them all in true nobility of character—this prophet, so selfish and so jealous of his rights, who had not a drop of tenderness in his nature, won the Ninevites to true repentance by his harsh and severe message, and yet Israel and Judah gave no heed to the most tender and devoted and patient teachers whom God sent them in such numbers.

The style of the book is remarkable for the beautiful simplicity of its prose. The only poetry is contained in the prayer (2 : 2-9), which consists in part of sentences borrowed from the Psalms.

The prophet Amos takes us into the Northern kingdom at the time when Uzziah was king of Judah, and Jeroboam II. king of Israel, about a half-century later than Joel. It was a most prosperous time for both Judah and Israel. On the throne of each nation sat an able and suc-

Amos
about 775 B. C.

cessful ruler, and a long lease of power was granted each monarch in which to carry out his designs.¹

Uzziah, equally successful in peace and in war, restored the power and prestige of Judah, which had suffered greatly in the latter years of his father, under whom the kingdom had become tributary to Israel. He also extended the boundaries of his country more widely than any of his predecessors. In the north, Jeroboam's great victories gave Israel rest from foreign enemies and secured a period of repose, during which the nation greatly increased its wealth and prosperity.

But underneath this splendor and luxury there was an increasing profligacy, especially in the Northern kingdom.

The most conspicuous features of this were: the lewdness of the women, the extravagance of the rich, and the oppression of the poor.² By their contact with heathen nations the people were also becoming more and more weaned from the worship of Jehovah, and were reducing to a still lower state of degradation the ancient sanctuaries at Bethel and Gilgal.

At this juncture Amos came from an obscure village among the hills of Judea and uttered his warnings in the chief sanctuary of the north at Bethel.

He was a simple herdsman, who had received no training in the schools of the prophets, and remarkably illustrates that "grace which selects its ministers from the tents of the shepherd, as well as from the palace of the sovereign." That he, a man of such humble origin and lowly calling, should have left his herd and, with staff in hand, should have journeyed so far away from home and into another and somewhat hostile kingdom, shows how deeply God's

¹ Uzziah fifty-two years, Jeroboam forty-one (according to Ewald fifty-three) years.

² Amos 2 : 6, 7 ; 3 : 9 ; 8 : 5 ; Hosea 4 : 13, 14.

message had sunk into his soul. He was no Jonah, fleeing from the call of duty, but exhibited a most bold and unflinching spirit in the fulfillment of his divine commission. His message was stern and uncompromising ; he uttered a multitude of denunciations but few promises ; he announced not only the impending ruin of the house of Jeroboam, but also the end of the Northern kingdom itself.¹

His words however seem to have produced no improvement.

The king apparently took no notice whatever of this lowly accuser, while Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, treated him with the utmost contempt. Amos, undaunted by the priest's scornful treatment, continued to utter his warnings, and predicted for the obdurate Amaziah a day of fearful punishment.²

Though he declares with great apparent definiteness the exact date of his prophecy, his chronological landmark is obscure to us.

He uttered his words two years before the earthquake,³ which seems to have been an epoch-making event, since it is also referred to by Zechariah,⁴ but we have no means of fixing its date. From slight indications here and there in the book, we should place the time of Amos' visit somewhere in the earlier days of the two kings, about 775 B. C.

This book may be divided into three parts. In the first part (chap. 1, 2), the prophet enumerates the sins of Israel and of the surrounding nations. In the second part (chap. 3-6), he describes God's goodness to his people and their abuse of it, together with the judgments that have come and are yet to come in consequence. In the third

¹ Amos 7 : 9 ; 9 : 8.

² 7 : 17.

³ 1 : 1.

⁴ Zech. 14 : 5.

part (chap. 7 to the end), he gives an account of his treatment by Amaziah, followed by a series of visions, and ending with his only words of hope.

It is probable that after Amos had returned to his home in Tekoa, and to his former occupation, as herdsman and fruit-gatherer, he reduced to writing the words he had uttered with the living voice in the presence of priest and people. Possibly he may at the same time have amplified and elaborated his spoken utterances, and have imparted to them a finish which his abrupt address would scarcely exhibit. It has been the custom to call Amos "a rustic prophet," unskilled in speech; but modern critics now reverse this ancient saying to which Jerome first gave currency. There are no signs of provincialism in his language, except a few words which may be local rather than rustic. He does not indeed rival Isaiah and Micah in sublimity, or Joel in beauty of description. He is simple and sometimes even prosaic. But his thoughts are well expressed, and he abounds in images of rural life. The clear and orderly arrangement of his thought, and his allusions to history, would indicate that he was an educated man for his day; not a strange thing, since a shepherd's or herdsman's life in the Orient was favorable to mental culture, as witness the cases of Moses and David. There are parallelisms of language which show that he had read the prophecy of Joel.¹

Amos is referred to in the New Testament by Stephen (Acts 7 : 42), and by James (Acts 15 : 16).

The death of Jeroboam, in whose reign Amos had prophesied, was followed by a period of anarchy and confusion.

¹ Of course, if we believe Joel to be the later of the two then the converse would be true, that Joel repeats Amos.

His son Zachariah was murdered by a usurper, named Shallum, after a reign of but six months. Shallum's occupancy of the throne was briefer still, lasting but a single month, when he was slain by Menahem. This man managed to hold on to the crown for ten years, not by any real merit, but by the adroitness with which he trimmed his sails to every breeze.

Hosea
about 750 B. C.

He bought off the king of Assyria with a great ransom, which he afterward exacted from the people, and for this tribute the Assyrian monarch not only left the land in peace, but strengthened Menahem upon the throne. Unlike his predecessor, he was thus able to transmit his authority and power to his son. The latter's reign, however, was brief, for after two years he was slain in a conspiracy, to be succeeded by another usurper.

The anarchy continued, usurper following usurper, until in the reign of Hoshea, the fifth in the list of illegitimate kings, the Assyrians came and besieged Samaria, and after three years took it and carried the people away captive.

This fate was well deserved, for the nation had become thoroughly corrupt. The picture of the national life as given by Hosea is appalling :¹

There was a universal dissolution of social order and morality. Every commandment of God was continually broken. The land was full of lust and crime ; swearing, lying, murder, theft, and adultery constituted the very life of society ; and there was no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.² Kings and princes were profligates ; merchants were cheats ; women were lewd ; priests shared in the carnival of wickedness, and by their shameless lives and corrupt teachings plunged the people into deeper excesses. In spite of this fearful deluge of iniquity, the nation was

¹ For a graphic description of the times, see Pusey, "Minor Prophets, Hosea," p. 3.

² 4 : 1, 2.

undisturbed and confident. None saw the impending dangers. They believed that their many sacrifices would insure them against calamity; and if some judgment of the Lord awoke them from their false security, it was but for a moment,¹ and they soon relapsed into their former condition.

So depraved has the people's heart become, that Hosea sees no signs of any future reformation, and presages naught but the entire wreck of the nation.

They have rejected Jehovah, and their doom is impending. The Assyrian avenger is at hand. Samaria shall be destroyed;² thistles shall cover her altars;³ her king shall pass away like foam upon the waters.⁴ Cities and fortresses shall fall before the ruthless invader,⁵ and neither sex nor age shall be spared.⁶

But the ultimate aim of all prophecy is consolation, not judgment, and though Hosea does not arch the future with such a rainbow of promise as we behold the southern prophets flinging across the darkest skies, he utters some of the sweetest and most gracious expressions of divine love and tenderness to be found within the lids of the Old Testament.

Just at what time this Jeremiah of the North, this "most melancholy of all prophets," as Ewald calls him, appeared to rebuke the wickedness of the people and the shamelessness of the priests, we are not precisely informed. The title to his book tells us that he labored during the reigns of four kings of Judah and one of Israel;⁷ but this leaves a

¹ 6 : 4. ² 13 : 16. ³ 10 : 8. ⁴ 10 : 7. ⁵ 8 : 14. ⁶ 13 : 16.

⁷ Various have been the conjectures why only a single king of Israel is mentioned. Perhaps Hosea or his editor would not recognize those upstart kings that succeeded the son of Jeroboam. Possibly the Jewish editor of his book (for of course it has come to us through Jewish hands) may have added the Jewish names to the single Israelitish king whom Hosea had himself mentioned in order to mark the beginning of his ministry.

large margin of uncertainty as to the date of his appearance and the duration of his ministry.

Had his labors covered the entire reigns of these kings, it would have lasted nearly a century, from 782 B. C., the date of Jeroboam's accession, to 697 B. C., the date of Hezekiah's death. He might, however, have been justly described as a contemporary of these kings had he labored from the closing years of Jeroboam to the opening years of Hezekiah, less than a quarter of a century. If, as is generally supposed, he prophesied for more than fifty years, his ministry was a wonderful illustration of patience and fidelity, for there is not a line in his book to show that his tender appeals ever met with any response from the people.

It is generally agreed that Israel was the scene of his labors, though the title would suggest that his words concerned Judah also. But the whole coloring of his discourse, and especially his frequent reference to well-known places in the Northern kingdom, indicate Israel as the sphere of his activity.

Of his personal history nothing is known, unless we concede his marriage with "a lewd woman," who bore him two children, to be historical. This marriage is the perplexing question of Hosea's book, and many different opinions are held about it.

Ancient interpreters generally regarded the transaction as purely imaginary, while modern critics are inclined to believe it to be literally true. The style of the narrative, the names of his wife and her father, and the pathos of the description, harmonize best with the literal interpretation. The difficulty which has been felt as to the morality of such a transaction rests possibly on a mistaken exegesis. We need not suppose that the prophet married a woman of an impure life, but that having married her as a pure woman, he afterward found her to be dissolute and unfaithful, and in

this infidelity of his wife he discovered a picture of the nation's treatment of Jehovah. As he contemplates his ruined home, the conviction is borne in upon his soul that his sad and disgraceful family life is a parable for the nation to study. Israel has proved false to Jehovah as his tenderly loved wife has proved false to him. God has for centuries been enduring shame and humiliation on account of his people's idolatrous propensities, just as he has been outraged in his tenderest affections by his wife's acceptance of, yea, even running after, other lovers.

The nation needed just such an object-lesson as this, for words had failed, and in making the prophet's sad experience a living picture of his own relations with Israel, God did his utmost to win them back to duty—but in vain.

Although this theory is growing in favor, many eminent scholars still contend for the allegorical interpretation. Dr. Hackett, in "Smith's Bible Dictionary," under "Hosea," has well stated the ordinary objections to the literal interpretation of this story. But we believe that this alone does full justice to the prophet's words and explains the deep and tender pathos of his language. Only such a struggle between his love and wounded honor—a struggle consuming his very life—can account for the tenderness of his allusions to the faithless one, and for the overmastering predominance of this special image of disloyalty over his thought and language.

Hosea has proclaimed with wonderful power the truth of God's unchangeable love for his people. No other prophet has surpassed him, or perhaps even equaled him, on this theme.

Jehovah loves his people, not because they are worthy, but because they are his, and in this divine love alone the prophet sees any hope for the future. God cannot let his people utterly perish, because he loves them; and though

the prophet beholds no single germ of repentance in the nation's heart, he discovers in God's great heart a sure sign of future promise.

The book is generally divided into two unequal portions. In the first three chapters we have the relations between God and his people imaged forth in the story of the prophet's unfortunate marriage. In chap. 4 to the end, we have a series of discourses which commentators have vainly attempted to classify. They describe the people's guilt, the goodness and patience of God, and the impending ruin of the national life, ending with a sweet strain of consoling promise.

The style of Hosea is very abrupt and broken.

Jerome's remark has often been quoted : " Hosea is concise, and speaks in disconnected sentences." He has the least appearance of order and connection of thought of any of the prophets, and is consequently the hardest to interpret. Bishop Lowth compares his prophecies to the ancient Sibylline leaves, and Eichhorn likens him to a bee flying from flower to flower, to a painter reveling in strong and glowing colors, and to a tree that wants pruning. Yet with all his obscurity he abounds in splendid utterances.

Fire, pathos, and tenderness are his conspicuous qualities. There are perhaps more quoted and more quotable sayings in his prophecy than in any other of the Minor Prophets.

SUMMARY.

JONAH. The earliest prophet whose date is certain. The question of the authorship of his book. Its contents. Doubts about the historical character of the narrative. Three reasons for accepting it as fact rather than fiction. Its great lessons often overlooked. Its special aim. Its style. **AMOS.** State of affairs in Judah and Israel. The prophet's courage. Analysis of his

book. Character of his writing. HOSEA. Anarchy in Israel. The terrible picture of the times which the prophet paints. The duration of his ministry. His marriage. His special emphasis on God's love. Analysis of his prophecy. His style.

CHAPTER VII

PROPHETS OF THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM

(Before the Fall of Jerusalem, 736 B. C.—587 B. C. Isaiah.)

THE great prophetic names of the first two centuries after the death of Solomon and the disruption of the kingdom are all connected with Israel. From this time forward they all belong to Judah. During the earlier period the prophets struggled and wrestled for the salvation of the Northern kingdom, but when at last her doom was sealed, and prophetic remonstrance was found to be unavailing, the Southern kingdom became the arena of their activity, and in this arena appeared the most splendid and famous figures of all that noble brotherhood.

It was high time for prophetic warning and appeal in Judah, for she was fast hastening in the steps of her apostate sister of the north.

In spite of the inestimable privilege of the temple and of the observance of holy days, in spite of the priesthood and the teaching of the law, in spite of good kings who occasionally sat upon the throne, the seductive attractions of heathen worship were proving too powerful for the feeble virtue of the people, and they were fast lapsing into idolatry. Heathenish altars were springing up everywhere, and heathenish rites were becoming common.

Occasionally there were periods of reform when it seemed as if the people had really abandoned their evil ways and returned once and for all to Jehovah, but the reform was

never deep-seated and genuine, and no sooner was the restraining influence removed, than the nation flew back eagerly to its inveterate idolatries, as a bent bow springs back when the cord is loosed.

The restraining influence was generally the presence of a good king upon the throne, who kept the people outwardly loyal to Jehovah, but nothing more. When he died and was succeeded by a wicked ruler, as seemed generally to be the case, the nation ran riot in wickedness, just as England, which under the stern Puritan, Cromwell, had been religious, outwardly at least, became under the luxurious and licentious Charles the Second more self-indulgent and immoral than ever before in her history.

The first of these great prophets of the south who now began to appear on the stage of action, was in some respects the grandest prophetic figure of all Hebrew history, the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah, the son of Amoz, is undoubtedly the most brilliant and conspicuous star in the splendid constellation of the Hebrew prophets. He appeared on the scene while Hosea was laboring, or at least soon after he had completed his labors, in the Northern kingdom. The sphere of his activity was chiefly, if not exclusively, Jerusalem, and he seems to have lived in the midst of the nation's most cultivated society. His relations with kings, his knowledge of the life of the upper circles of society, and his familiarity with affairs of State, lend plausibility to the conjecture that he was of princely or noble blood.

Isaiah
736 B. C.

If Micah is the country prophet of this period, Isaiah is the court prophet. His writings reveal him as a man of

the most gifted and cultivated mind ; for it is no more to be presumed that such exquisite skill in poetry could exist without previous preparation, than that Raphael's Madonna could have been painted by an untrained artist. Inspiration does not preclude the necessity for, nor exclude the results of, previous study, nor does it give an exquisite finish to the work of an undisciplined mind. Inspiration has not imparted to the writings of Micah the peculiar excellencies that distinguish Isaiah. In each case the prophet's individual characteristics and the circumstances of his lot have colored his language. Micah writes like a man born and bred in the country. Isaiah like one who has lived at the capital and been trained and disciplined in the best schools. Micah is an inspired peasant, boldly championing the cause of the poor and the lowly ; Isaiah is a statesman as well as a reformer. He writes like one who moves easily and naturally in the highest circles of the capital, and improves the vices of society, not only with the boldness of a divine commission, but with the art and grace of the most perfect literary training.

We know very few particulars about his life. He was married and had at least two children, boys, who bore names suggestive of God's purposes toward the nation. According to 2 Chron. 26 : 22, he wrote a life of King Uzziah, while in 2 Chron. 32 : 32 a vision of Isaiah is mentioned, containing an account of the reign of Hezekiah, and forming part of the lost "book of the kings of Judah and Israel," but nothing further is known of these works. The title of his prophecy informs us that he prophesied "in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah," and in the sixth chapter we have a description of his "call," in the very year when King Uzziah died (736 B. C.). He played a conspicuous part in two crises of the national history (chap. 7, 8, and 36, 37), when he gave to the reigning kings advice of the great-

est value. How long he survived the second of these crises (701 B. C.) is uncertain. A tradition, current among both Jews and Christians, describes him as suffering martyrdom in the early part of the reign of Manasseh, and he is supposed to be alluded to in the words of Heb. 11 : 37, "they were sawn asunder."

During the latter part of the eighth century B. C., Isaiah exercised an influence that was deep and abiding in the kingdom of Judah.

The profound respect paid him as a prophet of the Lord in the days of Hezekiah (see 37 : 1-5) contrasts strikingly with the scant courtesy exhibited by Ahaz and his court (chap. 7), and shows how deeply his prophetic words had sunk into the hearts of the people. They had come at last to recognize and acknowledge his position and worth. Outside of the kingdom of Judah he seems neither to have exercised nor to have sought to exercise any influence. He scarcely pays any attention to Israel, which seems now for the first time to disappear from the circle of prophetic influence and admonition. He does indeed utter prophecies against Israel as against other nations, but all prophetic hopes and fears are henceforth centered about Judah alone.

The book of Isaiah may be divided into three general sections : First, a collection of prophecies of various dates, from the death of Uzziah, 736 B. C., to the latter part of Hezekiah's reign, about 700 B. C. (chap. 1-35). Second, a historical section containing a narrative of certain important events in the reign of Hezekiah (chap. 36-39). Except for the addition of the Song of Hezekiah, this historical narrative is essentially the same¹ as that found in the book of 2 Kings 18 : 13-19. Third, a collection of

¹ The differences are merely verbal.

prophecies having for their subject the restoration of the Jews from Babylon (chap. 40-66).

These three sections may be further subdivided as follows :

Chapters 1-12. The earliest prophecies, relating to the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. The prophet arraigns the nation for its sins, exhorts to repentance, and predicts God's purifying judgment (chap. 1). God's wrath is about to fall on all the pride and glory of man, and on the vanity and luxury of women ; the nation shall be destroyed, but a remnant shall be saved (chap. 2-5). Isaiah's call (chap. 6). The alliance of Israel and Damascus shall be broken (chap. 7-9), and even the invading Assyrian shall be punished in the day of his power (chap. 10-12).

Chapters 13-23. Prophecies on foreign nations. Babylon shall be destroyed by the Medes (chap. 13), and Israel shall sing an ode of triumph over the fall of the proud oppressor (14 : 3-23). Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Egypt, are in turn threatened with divine judgments (14 : 24-20). The fall of Babylon is again described (chap. 21), the inhabitants of Jerusalem rebuked (chap. 22), and the destruction of Tyre foretold (chap. 23).

Chapters 24-27. A single connected prophecy, picturing the awful nature of the divine judgments and the blessedness of God's redeemed people.

Chapters 28-33. A group of prophecies dealing almost exclusively with Judah's relations to Egypt and Assyria. Jerusalem warned (chap. 28) ; speedily shall she be besieged (chap. 29) ; in vain will the people look to Egypt for help (chap. 30, 31) ; but God shall deliver them, and brighter and better days shall then dawn upon Zion (chap. 32, 33).

Chapters 34, 35. A prophecy of the very different future of Edom and of God's ransomed people.

Chapters 36-39. A historical account of Sennacherib's insulting proposals (chap. 36) ; of the reply made at Isaiah's instigation and of God's answer to Hezekiah's prayer (chap. 37) ; of the king's sickness and cure (chap. 38) ; and of the Babylonian embassy, with its unfortunate results (chap. 39).

Chapters 40-66. A continuous prophecy, having a complete unity of subject and treatment and divided into the following heads: (a) In chap. 40-48, the prophet proves Jehovah's ability to deliver his people, in contrast with the impotence of idols, and summons Cyrus by name to his task of restoring the captives. (b) In chap. 49-59, he exhorts the people to prepare for the coming blessings, and paints a most wonderful portrait of the Servant of Jehovah. (c) In chap. 60-66, he describes the judgment that is to discriminate between God's loyal and disloyal servants, and to exclude the latter from the promised blessings.

Modern critics very largely attribute the last twenty-seven chapters to another author, whom they style the Second Isaiah, or the Great Unknown. The number and importance of those who entertain this opinion demand a statement of their reasons.

Three lines of argument are relied on to prove that this portion of the book is not the work of Isaiah, but of another writer living toward the close of the Babylonish captivity.¹

1. The time indicated in the prophecy itself is the period of the Exile. Jerusalem is ruined and deserted, while the men whom the author addresses are not the inhabitants of that city, the contemporaries of Ahaz and Hezekiah, but the exiles in Babylon. This is a strong proof that the writer lived in that period, for while the prophets do sometimes transfer themselves for a moment into the future, and speak as if it were the present, there is no other instance of such a sustained and long-continued transference to the future as the authorship of Isaiah would imply. The writer never speaks of the Exile as a coming, but always as a past, event, and looks constantly forward to deliverance from it.

2. The literary style differs from Isaiah's, as revealed in the first part of the book, and the change of subject is not sufficient to account for this marked difference of style.

¹ This statement is abridged from Driver's "Introduction," pp. 223-231.

"Isaiah's style is terse and compact; the movement of his periods is stately and measured; his rhetoric is grave and restrained. In these chapters a subject is often developed at considerable length; the style is much more flowing; the rhetoric is warm and impassioned; and the prophet often bursts out into a lyric strain, in a manner to which even Isa. 12 affords no parallel. Force is the predominant feature of Isaiah's oratory; persuasion sits upon the lips of the prophet who here speaks; the music of his eloquence, as it rolls magnificently along, thrills and captivates the soul of its hearers. So again, if the most conspicuous characteristic of Isaiah's imagination be grandeur, that of the prophet to whom we are here listening is pathos."

3. The theological ideas of chap. 40-66 are different from those of the first part. There is a larger and broader conception of the nature of God, a different idea of the relation of Israel and Jehovah, as is seen especially in the appearance of Jehovah's servant in place of the Messianic King. This servant is Israel, who is no longer threatened with rejection, but is to be the medium of religious instruction to the world. In a word, the prophet moves in a different realm and emphasizes different aspects of the truth from those which Isaiah contemplates.

In answer to these objections the advocates of the traditional view, while admitting these facts, discover in them no adequate proof of double authorship.

That the author speaks of the Exile as having already occurred, and constantly addresses the exiles as his contemporaries, nay more, writes as if he were an exile himself in the land of Babylon, is freely admitted. But this is inexplicable only if we regard the last twenty-seven chapters as a separate and independent work. If on the other hand we consider them an integral part of the book, there is nothing strange in this new standpoint. The prophet has

For a full discussion of this question from the conservative standpoint, consult Principal Douglas, "Isaiah One and His Book One." Fleming H. Revell Company, New York.

been ascending, as it were, a lofty mountain peak, and at last attains its summit, and standing there, like Moses on Nebo, he sees the future stretching out before him, and describes it in loftiest strains of inspired poetry. Is it strange and unnatural that in such an exalted mood the element of time should have disappeared? The Gentile prophet Balaam and the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah both view the future as if it were present. The only difference with Isaiah is, that he maintains this standpoint through a longer discourse. But who that believes the prophets were inspired of God can deny the possibility of such a prophetic realization of future scenes as to make the writer actually live in them for the time? The Apostle John surely had such visions of most distant events and times.

Again, the differences of thought and style between the first and second parts can be accounted for without supposing a diversity of authorship.

“A writer of genius as he grows old develops new thoughts, enlarges his vocabulary, varies his phraseology and style according to the occasion which leads him to write or the intensity of his emotions.”

Even according to the critics who deny Isaiah's authorship of the last chapters, the resemblances are scarcely less remarkable than the differences, while opposing writers claim that the likeness of style is more pronounced than between either portion and any other writer of the Old Testament. Both the first and the last parts of the book are equally remarkable for sublimity of thought and language, and in that respect are unrivaled. In passing to the concluding portion there is neither descent nor ascent, and how could any other imbue himself with Isaiah's thoughts and style so completely as to have deceived his own countrymen and all subsequent readers until now?

This leads to a third argument, which has not been sufficiently emphasized.

Is it not incredible that we should have here, blended in a single volume, two writers, both of them far surpassing every other Old Testament writer in grandeur and sublimity

of style, and elevation and spirituality of thought, and that one of these, perhaps the greater of the two, whose words form the very culmination of Old Testament prophecy, not only for their beauty but for their intrinsic worth, should have completely disappeared from even the knowledge of his countrymen, that not the faintest traces of his existence should be preserved anywhere, even in tradition, and the very question whether there was such a man should be purely an academic question, started by scholars, who in the first instance, at least, were led to their questionings by anti-supernatural tendencies? Inferior men who wrote at the same time have been remembered, but the greatest prophet Judea ever produced has been absolutely forgotten—so absolutely that not a whisper concerning him comes down to us from the past! Does not this supposition present a more difficult problem than Isaiah's authorship of those doubtful chapters?

We must, however, admit that the prevailing view in the learned world favors the theory of double authorship, while many attribute large portions of the first thirty-nine chapters also to other writers.

Some of these critics are firm believers in the supernatural element in prophecy, and insist that their theory in no way impairs the religious value of the anonymous portions. And we must remind the reader that the question is after all a purely critical one, to be decided, if at all, on the principles of literary criticism. It is simply a question of authorship and dates, not of inspiration. If Isaiah did not write the concluding chapters of his book, then some other prophet fully as great as he did write them; and it still remains true, that they constitute the crown of all prophetic writings. They contain the words that will irresistibly come into the memory when the name of Isaiah is mentioned; they excel all other portions in that charm which has riveted the world's fascinated attention; and they are undoubtedly the most thoroughly read chapters in the prophetic books. This portion of Isaiah shines with a most splendid

light, and whoever wrote it, it can never lose its glorious position among prophetic utterances.

Isaiah not only presents a much more highly developed doctrine of the Messiah than any other prophet, but his conception in many particulars differs from the ordinary Messianic idea.

His suffering Servant of Jehovah is an entirely new conception, not inconsistent with the ordinary ideal of a Messianic king, as some critics maintain, but so different from it that, until Jesus of Nazareth came, it was impossible to perceive how a single person could combine both portraits in himself. Even now, it is only as we take into account the future coming of our Lord in glory, as well as his lowly appearance on earth and his death on the cross, that these strangely varying portraits of the Messiah become reconciled and blended. It is not correct to say that the figure of the Servant is simply a development of the idea of a Messianic king. It is a parallel conception ; but the two are no more inconsistent than the two rôles of Saviour and Judge in which Jesus Christ appears in the New Testament.

This Servant, whom Isaiah describes with such wonderful impressiveness, has been interpreted by many modern critics as a picture of the better portion of the nation, or of the people of Israel considered ideally. This interpretation has lately grown much in favor. Isaiah does indeed specifically call the nation Jehovah's servant (44 : 21), but as he proceeds with his description, it is evident that he passes from the nation as a whole to a single individual, who stands in marked contrast with the nation, even with the better and more spiritual portion of it.

Concerning the nation, considered as God's servant, he says : "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins" (44 : 22), while of

this individual Servant he writes : "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed" (53 : 5). Surely, the servant whose sins are blotted out and forgiven is not the Servant who vicariously bore the sins of others. And if this suffering Servant be any portion of the nation, what portion can it be? What part of the nation deserved any such praise as this? Would it not be a gross exaggeration, or even perversion of the truth, to describe any class of the community as a sinless sufferer, bearing on its stainless shoulders the sins of the rest? Could this be said of the leaders of society, or of the priests and the Levites? And was there any better fragment of the people from which the prophet would exclude himself and his disciples, saying : "All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all?"

Surely if any portion of the nation could be described as Jehovah's suffering servant, bearing the sins of the rest, it was the prophets ; but Isaiah expressly disclaims for them any such position. This consideration effectually disposes of the theory that we have here the description, either historical or prophetic, of Jeremiah, or of some unknown martyr prophet.

Again, if this is a picture of the nation considered ideally, or of some ideal personage, how could such an ideal be a vicarious sacrifice? The nation might have actually played such a rôle in the history of the world, though as a fact we know it did not. It suffered for no sins but its own. Judah was not punished for the sins of Israel, nor Israel for the sins of Judah, but each suffered its own richly deserved punishment. Of what value then, when the nation was actually so perverse and corrupt, would be this picture of an ideal nation exhibiting traits the actual nation never possessed in the smallest degree? Are not all such "ideals" entirely of the modern world and foreign to the realm of Hebrew conceptions? With the prophets the Messiah and all related conceptions of the glorious future were something more than ideals, pictures of the imagina-

tion ; they were prophecies of definite, concrete realities, which the author expected the future to see incarnated and realized.

It is to be remembered that the ancient Jewish church, as well as the modern Christian, has generally identified this Servant with the Messiah predicted by former prophets.

An interpretation so hallowed by the consent of ages is not to be lightly set aside. Any new interpretation ought to give most ample reasons for its existence. But this modern exposition creates more difficulties than it explains. Every unprejudiced reader must confess that the impression made upon his mind in reading the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is, that we have here the portrait not of a class but of an individual. Every believer in the supernatural element in prophecy will exclaim with Delitzsch : "It looks as if it had been written beneath the cross upon Golgotha" ; and will echo his further statement, that it "is the most central, the deepest, and the loftiest thing which Old Testament prophecy, outstripping itself, has ever achieved."

The poetical genius of Isaiah is unequaled and unrivaled. He is master of every rhetorical art. Each of the other prophets has some special characteristic or characteristics, but Isaiah seems to be a universal genius. All kinds of writing appear to be equally easy to him. If the whole book is from his hands, then he wields the most versatile and brilliant pen of all the writers of the Old Testament.

He is equally at home in pathos and scorn ; he can paint natural scenery with ravishing beauty, or sing an ode of triumph with tremendous power. He is lyrical and dramatic. What lyric beauty in the hymns of gratitude sung by the redeemed people ! (25 : 1-5 ; 26 : 1-10.) What intense dramatic force in the scene, where grim shapes of departed heroes utter their ironical greeting to fallen greatness ! (14 : 3-20.) In depth and breadth

of sympathy he is unrivaled. If Micah, as "a man of the people," exhibits a more intense personal feeling in championing the cause of the peasants against the nobles, Isaiah's hatred of oppression and tenderness toward poverty are no less genuine and heartfelt, while the broad sweep of his vision includes a multitude of things no other prophet has touched upon. He sees the many-sidedness of life in its good and in its bad aspects. His pictures of future bliss show loveliest colors, unequaled elsewhere, while in his denunciation of sins he assails every form of iniquity : idolatry, witchcraft, oppression, pride, vanity, and hypocrisy. He reproves the incompetency of rulers, the injustice and oppressions of the rich, the vanity of the women, the insincerity of the priests, and the hypocrisy of false prophets. He mingles in his denunciations unsparing sarcasm, biting wit, and keen irony, which, together with his quick eye for matters of detail, render his pictures of the times wonderfully graphic and impressive.

Of the style of the first part Driver says : Its "characteristics are grandeur and beauty of conception, wealth of imagination, vividness of illustration, compressed energy, and splendor of diction." The style of the second part Cheyne describes as "silver tones of which the ear is never weary ; honied rhetoric, which thrills like a subtle odor, even those who have lost a key to its meaning." We close with these words from the great German, Ewald : "Both as prophet and as author Isaiah stands upon that calm, sunny height, which in each several branch of ancient literature one eminently favored spirit at the right time takes possession of, which seems as it were to have been waiting for him, and which, when he has come and mounted the ascent, seems to keep and guard him to the last as its own right man. In the sentiment which he expresses in the topics of his discourses, and in the manner of expression, Isaiah uniformly reveals himself as the Kingly Prophet."

SUMMARY.

The great prophetic names at first belonged to the Northern kingdom, afterward to the Southern. Condition of Judah at this time. ISAIAH. His position among the prophets. Contrast with his contemporary, Micah. His personal history. His increasing influence. Analysis of his book. The question of a second Isaiah. Three lines of argument to prove double authorship: (1) the time of the second part is that of the Exile; (2) the style of the two portions is different; (3) the theological ideas of the two portions are not the same. These arguments answered. The question critical, not religious. Isaiah's doctrine of the Messiah. Who is the Suffering Servant? The poetical genius of Isaiah.

CHAPTER VIII

PROPHETS OF THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM

(Before the Fall of Jerusalem, 736 B. C.—587 B. C. Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah)

WHILE Isaiah was uttering his magnificent prophecies in Jerusalem, there appeared in the low country of Judea, near the Philistine border, a bold and courageous peasant prophet, who was especially the champion of the poor and lowly.

Micah
about 725 B. C.

The title to his book tells us that he prophesied in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, but it is more than likely that the prophecies which have been preserved to us belong chiefly to the time of the last-named king, who, though he had for his chief instructor and adviser the great Isaiah, was nevertheless influenced in no slight degree by this humbler country prophet. One illustration of this influence is furnished us in the writings of Jeremiah (26 : 18, 19).

Hezekiah was undoubtedly one of the best kings that ever sat on the throne of David. The book of Kings declares that "after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him" (2 Kings 18 : 5). He called a halt in the downward movement of the national life, and restored at least something of its ancient splendor and prosperity. Unfortunately he was succeeded in his son Manasseh by one of the wickedest and worst of kings, and all the beauty and bloom of restored pros-

perity and renewed spiritual life soon disappeared, as flowers wither in the chilling blasts of oncoming winter.

The brief historical reminiscence in Jer. 26 : 18, 19 would seem to indicate that Hezekiah did not at first think of playing the rôle of a reformer, but was spurred into it by the words of Micah.

It was probably in the early days of Hezekiah that Micah uttered these prophecies, or if they were spoken before, they were then perhaps for the first time collected and published, and so brought to the notice of the king. We should, therefore, place him about 736-725 B. C.

Though living in Judea, Micah does not confine his attention to it alone, but casts his eye with evident sympathy and interest upon its northern neighbor, whose affairs were steadily becoming worse and worse. He arraigns Israel, as well as Judah, for her sins, and predicts her complete overthrow. But though he severely denounces iniquity and oppression, he loves also to dwell upon God's promises, and spans the dark cloud of threatening with a glorious bow of hope. He paints a lovely picture of "the last days," the opening words of which Isaiah thought worthy of a place in his own visions (4 : 1-5 : 15 ; comp. Isa. 2 : 2-4). In this glorious picture the hope of a Messiah emerges more clearly and definitely than in any previous prophetic writings, for Isaiah's splendid Messianic prophecies are evidently of a later date.

There is also a remarkable minuteness of detail in his forecast.

He not only predicts the deliverer, but foretells Bethlehem as his birthplace (5 : 2), a passage that was regarded in Jewish circles as the classic and authoritative announcement on that subject, and was so quoted by the Sanhedrin to Herod (Matt. 2 : 4-6). He also paints the doom of Samaria and of Zion in language that has received as complete a ful-

fillment (1 : 6 ; 3 : 12). Any traveler who has beheld the plowed fields on the eastern slope of Zion, or has ridden over the deserted site of Samaria, now given up to the labors of the husbandman, with nothing but broken columns remaining to attest its former splendor, will be struck with the remarkable coincidence between the prophet's description and the actual condition of these places.

The corruption of society and of its leaders, which aroused the indignation of other prophets, receives a severe scourging at the hands of Micah.

With graphic power he describes the grasping aristocracy, robbing the poor of their houses and lands, the unjust judges, blinded by bribes, the hireling priests, whose only thought is their pay, the false and vicious prophets, whose only fitness for office is their ability to please wicked and self-indulgent people. All these stand in the market for the highest bidder. His sympathies, as is natural in a country prophet, are strongly with the oppressed peasantry, and he defends their cause with splendid eloquence. His style is vigorous and forcible, sometimes obscure, but especially rich and varied in figures drawn from rural life. Occasionally he even approaches Isaiah in beauty and sublimity.

The analysis of his book is as follows : He calls attention to the coming of Jehovah to punish the nations for their sins, and rebukes people, rulers, priests, and prophets (chap. 1-3). With an abrupt transition he passes to a glorious description of the last days, unfolds the future and brighter destinies of the people, and predicts the establishment of Christ's kingdom, in a passage of great beauty and power (chap. 4, 5). Finally he pictures the marked contrast between the gracious kindness of God toward his people and their ingratitude and selfishness ; and closes his prophecy with gracious promises of pardon and restoration (chap. 6, 7).

Micah is quoted in Matt. 2 : 6 ; John 7 : 42, and apparently also in Matt. 10 : 35, 36 ; Mark 13 : 12 ; and Luke 12 : 53.

In the chronological order Nahum follows Isaiah, Micah having been contemporary with the great "evangelical prophet," and having probably closed his ministry before the latter's death.

Nahum
about 660 B. C.

The only certain clue to Nahum's date is his reference to the taking of Thebes, which we learn from the Assyrian monuments took place in 665 B. C.¹ He must have prophesied after this event, probably soon after, which would fix his date in the reign of Manasseh, about 660 B. C.

Nahum exhibits the unique peculiarity of limiting himself to a single theme, the announcement of the doom of the great city of Nineveh.

Of the sins and dangers of Judah he says not a word. His burden is the doom that hangs over the great heathen city, where Jonah had preached so effectively more than a century before, and whose inhabitants God had then so mercifully spared on account of their instant and deep repentance.

Nineveh at this time was the capital of the great and flourishing Assyrian empire. It was a city of vast extent and teeming population, a center of commerce, and famous for its wealth and splendor. Its immense resources were not all, however, the fruit of legitimate commerce, but had been obtained in large part by plundering the neighboring nations.²

¹ Sayce, "The Higher Criticism and the Monuments," p. 481.

² Renan says of Nineveh : "It was the first appearance in the world of military force : the result was a brutal despotism animated by no single moral or religious idea."

Nahum compares the city to a den of lions filled with prey (2 : 12). Previous prophets had watched with dismay the rising of this dreadful power above the horizon; they had described its onward movement and its all-devouring fury, that spared neither age nor sex. But Nahum changes the note of alarm and dread into one of exultation and triumph. He rejoices with a fierce and exultant joy as he beholds the approaching doom of this proud and insolent conqueror of his people. He describes her overthrow without a spark of sympathy or of regret for her fallen greatness and departed splendor. Her cruelty and rapacity had left no room for any other feeling than exuberant joy in every heart over her ruin. "All that hear the bruit (report) of thee shall clap the hands over thee" (3 : 19). In the case of Jonah's mission we have the remission of the divine judgment on account of repentance, in Nahum's its unhindered execution. One more denunciation was given still later by Zephaniah, and then the whole was accomplished, not later than 608 B. C.

Nothing is known of Nahum's life beyond the name of his native village, Elkosh, which some believe to have been on the east side of the Tigris, and others have located in Galilee. Capernaum, which means literally "Nahum's village," has been regarded by some as the prophet's residence, if not his birthplace.

If he was descended from Israel, and was living in Assyria, then he is the one and only Israelitish prophet of the Exile; while if he was a resident of Galilee, like Jonah, he confutes the Jewish opinion that out of Galilee no prophet had ever arisen (John 7 : 52). In the latter case we have the striking fact that one Galilean prophet had been sent to announce the doom of Nineveh, which by its repentance was averted, and that more than a century later another Galilean had proclaimed its destruction, which this time was fully accomplished.

No indication is given where his prophecy was uttered.

Ewald and others suppose it to have been in the neighborhood of Nineveh itself, and attribute the vividness of the picture to the fact that he was an eye-witness of the approaching enemy. But the prophet's description exhibits no special familiarity with anything but the appearance of the Babylonish soldiers, and that might have been gained from hearsay, while his allusions to Lebanon, Carmel, and Bashan would rather indicate that he wrote in the land of Palestine for people familiar with those landmarks.

The analysis of the book is as follows : From Jehovah's character the prophet argues the fall of Nineveh, and the deliverance of his people whom she has so sorely oppressed (chap. 1). The glad messenger hastens with the tidings of the city's overthrow, which is painted with great power and beauty (chap. 2). Nineveh's downfall is due to her cruelty and oppression. Her former glory and coming desolation are sharply contrasted (chap. 3).

The style of Nahum is of a very high order, inferior to that of none of the minor prophets, and scarcely to Isaiah himself in the boldness and animation of the descriptions.

The character of Jehovah is sublimely portrayed in the opening chapter, while the siege and capture of the city are splendidly described : the scarlet-clad warriors, with their bright red shields, the armed chariots dashing madly to and fro, their scythes scintillating in the sunlight with the rapidity of their movements, the waving of the cypress spears, and finally the vain attempts at defending the wall, the bursting of the river gates, the flooding of the city, and the terror-stricken flight of the inhabitants.

The only prophetic voice, the utterances of which have been preserved to us, that broke the silence of sixty years after the death of Isaiah, was Nahum's brief, exultant pæan over the approaching doom of Nineveh. The largest portion of that period was occupied by the reign of Manasseh, the longest in the annals of the kingdom. No reform was

possible while this wicked monarch occupied the throne. Amon, his son, was heir to all his evil ways, but Josiah, who was crowned at the early age of eight years, was conspicuous for his goodness.

Not until Josiah's eighteenth year was the great religious reformation that has immortalized his name inaugurated, and it was probably during these previous years that Zephaniah appeared with his message of judgment and exhortation to repentance. According to the title of his book, Zephaniah was a lineal descendant of Hizkiah, in whom we must probably recognize the famous King Hezekiah. More than likely his message may have prompted Josiah to begin his work of reformation. We must place him therefore somewhere between 639-622 B. C.

Zephaniah
about 630 B. C.

Zephaniah announces the divine judgment upon Jerusalem and all the known world for their sins. He predicts the coming of the day of the Lord, "a day of wrath," in language which inspired the "*Dies iræ*," the greatest of all the mediæval Latin hymns. His vision embraces all the nations known to him upon all of which Jehovah's judgment will fall. Who is to be the instrument of this vengeance he does not clearly indicate.

It has been suggested that the Scythians, who, according to Herodotus, had already broken over the Caucasian Mountains and were carrying desolation and spreading terror in every direction, are hinted at by the prophet. But this is very doubtful. We hold it more likely that he predicted the day of punishment, not because he saw it approaching, but because such heaven-defying wickedness could not possibly go unpunished.

Cheyne declares that the prophecy of Amos reveals "a dim presentiment of the philosophy of history." May we

not more truly say of the Hebrew prophets in general that they were the first great historians, who show not "a dim presentiment," but a wonderfully clear consciousness of "the philosophy of history," and perceive with an insight, never since equaled, the real foundations of national greatness and the actual causes of national ruin.

The analysis of the book is as follows: The prophet announces God's impending judgment, and specifies some of the sins that have provoked it (chap. 1). He exhorts to repentance, and urges the righteous to persevere in obedience, that they may escape the destruction which is coming on all idolatrous nations (chap. 2). Having described the future of the neighboring nations, he pictures the wickedness of Jerusalem, which has caused her ruin. He encourages the pious to expect deliverance, and describes the character of the people in that day when God shall restore them once more to their own land (chap. 3).

In point of style Zephaniah does not rank very high, his language often descending into mere prose. Nevertheless his thoughts are clearly expressed, and the light of lofty spiritual convictions shines through his words. He has the courage of Amos in rebuking sin, though possessing none of his beauty of language; and if he has none of Hosea's exquisite pathos, he possesses as firm a conviction of Jehovah's all-enduring love for his people.

SUMMARY.

MICAH. His influence over Hezekiah. Hezekiah's character. Micah's characteristics. Analysis of his book. NAHUM. His date. His theme. Nineveh. Nahum's birthplace. Locality where he wrote. Analysis of his book. His style. ZEPHANIAH. The bad kings of the previous period. General characteristics of his prophecy. Analysis of his book. His style.

CHAPTER IX

THE PROPHETS OF THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM

*(Before the Fall of Jerusalem, 736 B. C.—587 B. C.
Jeremiah, Habakkuk)*

CONTEMPORARY with Zephaniah was the prophet Jeremiah, whose fame by no means equals his worth. His poetic ability has been overshadowed by Isaiah's genius, while his excessive sadness, his tears and sighs, have repelled many who might otherwise have discovered and appreciated his real greatness.

**Jeremiah
627 B. C.**

Matthew Arnold was indignant when some one compared him with Jeremiah, and declared that this prophet was to him the least attractive of them all. His name has become a synonym for unreasonable grief, and the word "jeremiad" is used with a spice of ridicule or mockery to describe a lamentation unnecessarily demonstrative or unreasonably prolonged and tedious. And yet this sad prophet, whose excessive grief repels many if not most readers, as Dante's gloomy countenance frightened the women of Florence, was one of the very greatest, "the most human," as Ewald calls him, of that noble brotherhood. His was a never-failing patriotism, a love of country seldom equaled and never surpassed.

If he abounds in tears there were good reasons for them in the destruction which he beheld inevitably approaching, and from which he perceived no avenue of escape.

The misery that others had seen afar off actually pressed upon him, and he not only was compelled to behold the

approaching doom of the land he loved so intensely, but his very services in her behalf brought him nothing but hatred and persecution. While previous prophets had held out hopes of deliverance on condition of repentance, Jeremiah saw that the time for repentance had passed, and that nothing could now avert impending disaster. His rôle was not therefore that of one who seeks to stem the tide of rising evil, but rather that of one, who, seeing that destruction is inevitable, strives to prepare the people for it. He holds out no hope of averting the threatened doom of his loved land, but points away across the darkness of exile and captivity to a future restoration. Through the darkness gleams the light of those imperishable hopes that no prophetic eye ever failed, even in the darkest hours, to discover and to foretell.

He foresaw and predicted that the captivity would last seventy years,¹ but also that when the seventy years were over there would be a restoration as wonderful as the old-time deliverance from Egypt (25 : 11-14 ; 29 : 10-14 ; comp. 23 : 7, 8). And in the distant future he beheld a vision of the reunion of Israel and Judah under the sway of a Branch of the house of David, who should "reign and prosper," and "execute judgment and justice in the earth" (23 : 5, 6).

Jeremiah's writings enable us to form a clearer and more definite conception of his character and circumstances than we possess of any other prophet.

His prophecies abound in personal allusions and self-revealing pictures. The course of events moves him profoundly, and he utters without reserve the thoughts and emotions that are stirred within him on each occasion. We thus have imbedded in his work many incidents of his life and personal traits which are of the greatest value in forming a conception of his character and career.

¹ The actual period was fifty years, reckoning from the overthrow of the city to the return of the first exiles under Zerubbabel. Ezra 1.

He was the son of Hilkiah the priest, whom many critics hold to be the celebrated high priest who discovered the book of the law in the temple (2 Kings 22 : 8).

But the fact that the priests of Anathoth, his native place, were of the house of Ithamar, while Hilkiah was of the house of Zadok, seems inconsistent with this view. (See 1 Kings 2 : 26, 27, compared with 2 Sam. 8 : 17 and 1 Chron. 24 : 3 ; also 1 Chron. 6 : 12, 13, compared with 1 Kings 2 : 35.) His treatment by priests and officials at Jerusalem would seem to argue, however, that he had high connections.

He was still very young when called to the prophetic office (1 : 6). The exact date of this call he himself gives us, as the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah (B. C. 627).

His youth, together with a naturally shy and sensitive temperament, made the duties of his prophetic office a terrible ordeal. He was evidently of devout and ascetic character, with an almost feminine susceptibility, exceedingly self-distrustful, and easily depressed. Contrary to the almost universal Jewish custom, he was never married.¹ To such a man a pious wife would have been an invaluable treasure and support.

But though uninspired by home sympathy and comfort, and weighted with a shrinking nature that felt every varying emotion, he was called to face difficulties that might have appalled even an Isaiah. King, priests, prophets, people, were all arrayed against him.

Clad in his rough mantle he appeared from time to time among his neighbors of Anathoth, or more frequently still at Jerusalem, which was the chief scene of his labors, "rising early and speaking" (25 : 3) but meeting with nothing but reproach and derision daily. He had no

¹ The absence of all mention of wife and children may be regarded as sufficient proof of this in the case of one who so abounds in personal allusions.

message of comfort, but only words of woe. Even the finding of the book of the law, which filled the breasts of so many good men with bright hopes of reformation and prosperity, did not lift him from his despondency, for he saw that the improvement would be only superficial, and felt compelled still to continue his words of warning and of judgment, and he thus found that he, a man of a naturally retiring and sensitive nature, had strangely enough become "a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth" (15 : 10).

No wonder that he stood trembling before his task ; the wonder is, that with such an introspective nature and surrounded by such appalling difficulties he never once through a long period of years became recreant to duty. He was no Jonah in action, however much he may have resembled him in disposition. Through all human weakness and outward persecution, through all doubts of his own and mocking taunts of others, he pressed on in his cause of obedience with a fidelity that was simply sublime. Other prophets had had their intervals of repose and times of honor and influence, but his life was one uninterrupted martyrdom. At times the terrible doubt would suggest itself whether, after all, his whole work was not a self-prompted delusion ; but he resisted the doubt and kept on. His temperament made him shrink indeed from the fiery trial and rendered his work peculiarly painful, but he never permitted his infirmity to stand in his way or excuse him from obedience.

Several times his life was in great danger, and he was rescued only through the intervention of powerful friends ; on one occasion by the interposition of the king himself. A large portion of his time he spent in prison, and he was still a prisoner at the fall of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar,¹ who had no doubt heard of his constant recommendation of submission to his authority, gave him the choice between Babylon and Jerusalem. He chose to remain, and resided with Gedeliah, the native governor of Mizpeh. When his protector was murdered, he was carried against his will to Egypt, where he predicted the approaching conquest and desolation of the Nile valley. Tradition

¹ Correct form Nebuchadrezzar.

represents him as having suffered martyrdom there at the hands of the Jews.

The prophecies of Jeremiah are not arranged in chronological order, nor is it easy to discover the plan of their present arrangement. The best we can do is to arrange the discourses in two grand divisions, the first containing the prophecies and historical incidents preceding the destruction of Jerusalem (chap. 1-38), the second comprising the prophecies and history subsequent to the fall.

In chapters two to six we have presumably Jeremiah's first prophetic discourse in which he severely rebukes the people for their sins, declares Judah to be worse than Israel, and threatens her with coming judgment. In subsequent chapters he denounces the spirit of false security (chap. 7), exhorts the people to obey the words of the covenant (chap. 11), in evident allusion to the book of the law discovered in Josiah's eighteenth year, and with deepest emotions pleads with Jehovah for his country, but in vain (chap. 14, 15). In chapters eighteen and nineteen we have lessons from the potter, and in chapter twenty the persecution that befell him in consequence. He denounces judgments upon the successive rulers who in his day occupied the throne of Judah (chap. 21-23), contrasts the exiles and those remaining in Judea as good and bad figs (chap. 24), and in chapter twenty-five declares for the first time that Judah and the neighboring nations must fall under the sway of Babylon for seventy years. He relates his attempt to frustrate the intrigues against Babylon and to dispel false hopes (chap. 27-29) and prophecies (chap. 30-33) concerning the restoration. The remaining chapters of the first part are chiefly historical.

In the second part, from chapter thirty-nine to the end of the book, we have an account of the events of Jeremiah's life after the capture of Jerusalem, and a group of prophecies on foreign nations, ending with an account of the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of its inhabitants.

Respecting the composition of Jeremiah's book, we have fuller information than concerning the work of any other prophet.

From the narrative in the thirty-sixth chapter we infer that up to the fourth year of Jehoiakim, twenty-three years after his call, none of Jeremiah's words had been written down, at least in any permanent form. At the command of God he now writes out his discourses and Baruch reads them to the people, Jeremiah himself being then in prison. The king, having heard of this book, orders it to be read to him, but after listening to a few leaves only, he grows furiously angry, slashes it with his penknife, and throws it into the fire. Jeremiah is then commanded to rewrite the same words, which he does, adding still others. This book was undoubtedly the groundwork of our present text. In arranging these discourses Jeremiah doubtless adopted some particular order of thought, since he discarded the chronological order, but we cannot discover the principle he followed, and all attempts to introduce order into the seeming confusion have failed.

The peculiar features of Jeremiah's prophecies, besides their deep melancholy, is the emphasis laid on the New Covenant. This phrase, so full of significance for all subsequent ages, first appears in his writings.

The relations of the people with Jehovah established by the old covenant are seen to be insufficient, and there must be a new relationship; the law must be written on their hearts. In this conception Jeremiah is unique among the prophets, and this idea of God's law written upon the heart lifts his book to the very highest plane of spiritual teaching and renders it a never-failing source of instruction for every age of the church.

In poetical excellence Jeremiah is not regarded as reaching the heights to which many other prophets have attained.

He is not remarkable for sustained sublimity of thought and language like Isaiah, or for wonderful pictorial effects like Ezekiel, or for such fire and splendor as Habakkuk, but sentences of wonderful richness in spiritual thought glisten here and there like dewdrops on the grass, and there are occasional utterances of sublimity and power. He was evidently familiar with the writings of preceding prophets, and exhibits many traces of their influence upon him.

The book of Lamentations has been generally attributed to Jeremiah, as well as a number of the psalms, but in neither case is his name distinctly connected with the productions. Lamentations consists of a brief series of poems, composed with studied art, and in language of exquisite pathos, in which no form of sorrow is forgotten, and in which every feature that might stir up grief is introduced for the sake of completing the picture of woe.

The Chaldeans have overthrown Nineveh, according to the predictions of Nahum and Zephaniah, and are now about to appear in the Holy Land itself.

Mounted on swift horses they scour the country far and wide, sweeping along like a terrible east wind, destroying everything in their pathway, making a mock of kings, and laughing at the vain resistance of stout fortresses.

Habakkuk
about 600 B. C.

In the vivid picture which Habakkuk gives of their appearance, Ewald discovers "the traits of two wholly different nations. There is, on the one hand, a wild and warlike race, described in terms applicable at that time only to the Scythians, and there is a people practised in the arts of life, in the erection of costly structures, and the successful besieging of fortresses." These Scythians, who had advanced from Europe into Asia through the passes of the Caucasian Mountains, spreading terror on every hand, had

been won over as allies by the Chaldeans, and thus came to form part of their invading army.

Habakkuk predicts this invasion as the punishment which Jehovah will inflict upon his people for their sins.

But in that spirit of inexorable justice which animates every prophetic utterance, he foresees also the doom of the proud and insolent invader himself, a doom which shall justly overtake him because of his rapacity, cruelty, injustice, and gross idolatry.

Of the prophet's personal history we have not a single word. The supposition that he was a Levite and engaged in the temple service can scarcely be inferred with any certainty from the musical direction at the close (3 : 19). Considerable difference of opinion exists as to the period in which he lived. It is probable, however, that he delivered his prophecy a little before the Chaldean invasion, for in 1 : 5, 6, the invaders are described as about to enter the land, but as not having actually entered it. He must, therefore, have prophesied in the reign of Jehoiakim, about 600 B. C.

The analysis of his book is as follows : The prophet describes the wickedness of the Jewish people, which calls for punishment, but expostulates with Jehovah on account of its severity (chap. 1). He waits God's answer and receives it, a revelation which shall surely though not immediately be fulfilled, and shall result in the entire destruction of the Chaldean power (chap. 2). Then follows a sublime ode in which Habakkuk describes the majesty and might of Jehovah, and expresses, in conclusion, his unshaken confidence in him (chap. 3).

A great difference of opinion exists as to the time referred to in this poem (chap. 3), whether it relates to the

wonders God had wrought in the past, or to his coming to take vengeance on the Chaldeans.

Those who adopt this latter view urge the fact that thus a close connection is established between this ode and the two preceding chapters. But the first interpretation seems more in harmony with the language. Nor is such a review of God's glorious deeds in early days out of place in a prophecy in which the writer wishes to encourage his readers to hope in the Lord, even in the midst of the most threatening evils. Surely there could be no better way to inspire confidence than by calling attention to those marvelous interpositions of God which marked the early days of Hebrew history; in fact, such a reference to well-known events of former times would seem better adapted to his purpose than a prophetic outlook into the future.

In style Habakkuk has been regarded as occupying a very high place, being surpassed by none, and equaled by few of the prophets. He possesses great originality, deep feeling, and a very vivid imagination. His language is bold and animated, his pictures graphic, and his ode unrivaled for sublimity of thought and beauty of diction. One utterance of his (2 : 4) so impressed the mind of the Apostle Paul, that he appropriated it as a motto for his theological system. (See Rom. 1 : 17 ; Gal. 3 : 11.)

SUMMARY.

JEREMIAH. His unrecognized greatness. His task. His clear self-revelations. His personal history. His temperament. His sublime fidelity. Lack of chronological order in his writings. Analysis of his book. Circumstances of its composition. The New Covenant. Style of Jeremiah. Book of Lamentations. Its unknown authorship. Its theme. HABAKKUK. The advance of the Chaldeans. The Scythians. The punishment of the proud instrument of divine vengeance. The prophet's date. Analysis of his book. The ode. Style.

CHAPTER X

PROPHETS OF THE EXILE

(587 B. C.—538 B. C. *Obadiah, Ezekiel, Daniel*)

JERUSALEM, whose doom had been so long foretold, fell at last in 587 B. C. Though long delayed, the fate of Samaria at last overtook her sister capital in the south. Nebuchadnezzar came and besieged her and took her, and carried away her inhabitants into captivity. The siege was long and difficult, for the city was strongly fortified, and the Jews were noted for their bravery.

Had the people had only to fight the Chaldeans, they might have resisted successfully even Nebuchadnezzar's mighty army. But he surrounded the city on all sides and cut off their supplies, and soon the horrors of famine were added to horrors of conflict. Without the walls were constant skirmishes, within were the dreadful ravages of famine and pestilence. Rich and poor alike suffered. Young and old lay dead in the streets. Children cried piteously to their mothers for bread, while so dreadful was the condition of the city that mothers, forgetting all their maternal instincts, devoured their own little ones.¹

At last, after holding out a year and a half, the city yielded. Samaria had resisted twice as long; but no sooner had the outer wall of Jerusalem been taken, than Zedekiah and his nobles, together with most of the soldiers, fled away by night. Their flight was in vain, however, for they were pursued and captured, and the city being now

¹ Jer. 52: 6; Lam. 2, 11, 12, 19-21; 4: 4-10.

defenseless was soon taken. While Nebuchadnezzar was at Riblah, in Syria, his generals entered Jerusalem.

In accordance with the spirit of ancient warfare, the place was given up to pillage.

The brutal soldiery roamed about the streets plundering and burning the houses of rich and poor. The treasures of the palace and of the temple were taken to Babylon. The chief representatives of the people were carried to Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar was, and there put to death. The king Zedekiah himself was made to walk in chains in Nebuchadnezzar's triumphal procession through the streets, and then, with eyes put out, was thrown into a dungeon, where he remained till the day of his death.

The destruction of Jerusalem was complete. None but the very poorest were left in the land, and naught remained of the glorious city but her fire-blackened ruins.

The old enemies of Judah rejoiced greatly at this humiliation of their hated rival, and amongst those whose joy was greatest were the Edomites. But a prophetic voice broke in upon their unhallowed joy and denounced divine vengeance upon them.

Of the origin, life, and circumstances of Obadiah we know nothing. The attempt to identify him with the Obadiah of Ahab's days, or with any other Obadiah mentioned in the Scriptures, is surely a mistake, for it is very evident from his prophecy that he must have lived after the fall of Jerusalem, the description of verses eleven to fourteen being plainly historical, not prophetic. He must therefore have been a contemporary of Jeremiah, writing between the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, in 587 B. C., and the subjugation of Edom, five years later. We must therefore place him about 585 B. C.

Obadiah
about 585 B. C.

The almost verbal agreement between verses 1-8 and certain passages in the forty-ninth chapter of Jeremiah has led to much discussion as to which is the earlier prophet of the two. The determination of the priority of two related writers can never be settled by internal evidence alone, and the study of these passages leaves the question still open. According to the data given above, however, we believe that Obadiah quoted Jeremiah, or more likely still, both of them made use of some earlier prophet.

The book of Obadiah consists of only twenty-one verses, and is therefore the shortest in the Old Testament. Its analysis is as follows: The prophet describes the pride of Edom and its coming humiliation, because of the unfriendly behavior of the Edomites toward the Jews in the days of their trouble. Had they calmly looked on at their brother's misfortune, it would have been grievous enough; but they had actually exulted in it, had assisted Judah's enemies, helped to plunder their goods, and intercepted and cut off their fugitives. For this, divine vengeance would come upon them. Though they trusted in their rock-hewn habitations, like an eagle in his nest, God would bring them down into the dust and humiliate their pride (ver. 1-16). In the last five verses the prophet foretells the restoration and peaceful settlement of the Jews in their own land in coming days, and the extension of their borders to every point of the compass.

The style of Obadiah is clear and forcible, but without any special distinction.

He pictures very pathetically the treatment his people had received from those who should have been friends, but he indulges in no violent denunciations, nor does he exult fiercely in the prospect of Edom's overthrow, as does Nahum over Nineveh's approaching doom.

This book is said to be a favorite one with modern Jews, who see therein depicted the future humiliation of Christians, whom they suppose the prophets in general to have prefigured under the name of Edom.

While the divine judgment hung suspended over Jerusalem, King Jehoiachin, with a great multitude of the better class, was carried away captive into Babylon. This was in 597 B. C., ten years before the fall of the city. These captives were undoubtedly the flower of the nation, the nobles, warriors, and artisans, only "the poorest sort of the people of the land" (2 Kings 24 : 14) remaining behind.

Ezekiel
593 B. C.

Among this company of exiles was Ezekiel, the son of Buzi, a priest. Though Josephus declares that he was but a boy at the time, it is more likely that he had already reached manhood. With others of his fellow-captives he was settled at a place called Tel-a-bib, "Corn Hill," on the banks of the river Chebar, probably "The Grand Canal" of Nebuchadnezzar, or less likely the Chaboras (modern Chabur), a tributary of the Tigris.

The exiles do not seem to have suffered actual want, or to have been severely oppressed, for Ezekiel lived in his own house, where the elders of Israel frequently visited him, and others appear to have been equally privileged (Ezek. 8 : 1 ; 14 : 1 ; 20 : 1 ; 33 : 30). Further knowledge of his life and circumstances is wanting, except that he was a married man, and that his wife died in the ninth year of his exile. How he supported himself we do not know, but his position as a priest, without temple or altar, must have been peculiarly sad, even beyond that of his fellow-captives, who were permitted to follow their former occupations.

His book reveals him to us as a man of a brooding

temperament, who passed much of his time in solitude and silent thought. He seems to have possessed great force of character and an invincible will.

If the people were stubborn and rebellious, he, their prophet, had a will as strong and a purpose as inflexible as theirs. He could endure any suffering or privation in the line of duty, as witness the calmness with which at God's command he bore the loss of his wife, though the deep tenderness that lay hidden behind those tearless eyes is revealed by the loving allusion he makes to her (24 : 15-18).

He received the divine call to his prophetic office in the fifth year of his exile, by means of a remarkable vision, and from that time he exercised the functions of a prophet and teacher in writing and speaking for twenty-two years.

Whatever opposition he at first encountered gradually melted away before the fulfillments of his predictions and the undoubted value of his teachings. At first the antagonism of his fellow-exiles was very marked, but little by little he won their confidence, until he became at last the exiled nation's recognized leader, and exerted a most potent and salutary influence in molding their thoughts and sustaining their hopes during this dark period of bondage.

The latest date mentioned in his book is the twenty-seventh year of his exile, 570 B. C. (29 : 17). Nothing certain is known of the date or manner of his death.

The arrangement of his book is extremely simple, following the chronological order. It is divided into three sections, composed respectively before, during, and after the siege of Jerusalem. In the first section the fall of the city is predicted; in the second are contained the prophecies on foreign nations; and in the third the future glorious restoration of Israel is described.

The first twenty-four chapters contain twenty-nine oracles, all, with one trifling exception (21 : 33-37), referring to the subject of the nation's religious and political fortunes in Babylon and Palestine.

Sitting there on the banks of the Chebar, the prophet watches the toils closing around Jerusalem, and foretells its certain destruction. Idolatry is its chief crime, and it must perish. But the exiles, now in Babylonia, also need further purification in order to form a nucleus for the new Israel of the future. Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, clearly perceived the unwisdom of intriguing against Babylon, and by various symbolical actions, as well as by direct teaching, urged upon the people the uselessness of resistance. In graphic language he portrays the sins that have brought on this now irreversible calamity, and, in spite of the anger of his fellow-captives and the contradictions of false prophets, insists upon the certainty of the coming doom of Jerusalem. But, like every other true prophet, he paints also a picture of brighter days to come, when the nation shall be renewed in heart and restored to its own land.

The following are some special features of these first twenty-four chapters.

The prophecy opens with a magnificent description of the appearance of Jehovah by the river Chebar (chap. 1), and the tragic moment is impressively noted (11 : 22, 23) when the glory of God departs from the doomed city. There is a striking picture of the pollutions of the temple, in which we discern the contaminating influence of Egyptian ideas (chap. 8). In clearest terms Ezekiel proclaims the prophet's responsibility (chap. 3), but also in words no less clear and distinct the responsibility of every individual (chap. 18). Some of the prophet's figures are very striking, and we see the influence of Assyrian sculpture upon his thought and language.

All this first series of prophecies (chap. 1-24) fall within the period between his call and the beginning of the siege

of Jerusalem (592 B. C.—589 B. C.). This part of his mission closes with the announcement, that on the very day when he was speaking the siege had begun; and he is commanded to refrain from any signs of sorrow over the loss of his beloved wife, who has just been taken from him, in order to teach the captives that the calamity about to happen to their beloved city will be too great for tears.

The succeeding eight chapters (chap. 25–32), with one brief exception (29 : 17–21), which belongs to the twenty-seventh year of the prophet's exile, 570 B. C., and possibly also of chapter twenty-five, which has no date, belong to the period between the beginning of the siege and its close, from December, 589, to July, 587, at which time Ezekiel receives the news of the capture of the city.

In these chapters there is no reference to Judah or Israel, but divine judgments are pronounced against foreign nations. All of these prophecies are brief, except the two on Tyre and Egypt. The picture of Tyre as a merchant ship, equipped with the best the world affords, and propelled by a multitude of strong rowers, but falling at last into troubled waters and wrecked, to the horror and consternation of the nations, is a splendid piece of imaginative writing, rich in details, and elaborated with great vigor (chap. 26). The dirge over the king of Tyre (chap. 28) is very impressive, while the comparison of Egypt to a tall cedar (chap. 31), and the representation of the nations as a chorus of mourning women, greeting with ironical lamentations the slain Egyptian warriors as they descend into Sheol (chap. 32), is finely conceived.

The remainder of the book (chap. 33–48) dates after the fall of Jerusalem, and pictures the restored theocracy.

By the destruction of the city Ezekiel's truthfulness has been vindicated, and he now devotes all his powers, with unwearied patience and unswerving fidelity, to the task of

consoling his countrymen and preparing them for the renewal of Jehovah's blessing. He reproves the faithless rulers who have brought such distress upon the people, and promises a new shepherd, under whom there shall be peace and security (chap. 34). The miracle of the nation's restoration shall yet be accomplished (chap. 37), and though there must be a battle with the army of Gog, that antagonist shall be ignominiously overthrown, and there shall be no further occasion for fear (chap. 38, 39). The distribution of the land among the tribes, the priests, and the prince, together with the situation, dimensions, furniture, and ceremonies of the new temple, are minutely described (chap. 40-48).

This new temple has been variously interpreted. Some have supposed it to be a description of Solomon's ; others of a temple yet to be ; but the best interpretation regards it as simply an ideal description that will never have an earthly counterpart.

It is to be observed that this new temple stands in the midst of the Holy Land, surrounded by an ample sacred enclosure, which prevents the encroachment of palaces and other buildings, as in the case of Solomon's temple. The domain of the priests surrounds this enclosure, and the city lies altogether to the south of the temple. No foreigners are to assist in the service, and priestly functions are confined entirely to the line of Zadok. Following the description of the temple there is the picture of a wonderful stream that shall flow from the temple mount, growing gradually deeper, and turning the wilderness into fruitfulness, and healing the waters of the Dead Sea. In all the details of this new theocracy, while there is a general resemblance to the laws of Moses, the differences are many and remarkable.

The genuineness of the book of Ezekiel has seldom been questioned. While one or two attempts have been made to impeach its authenticity, it has been generally agreed

that the book bears throughout the unmistakable impress of a single mind.

In style Ezekiel does not occupy so high a place as Isaiah or Jeremiah, though opinions differ widely on this point, his work having received the most extravagant praise and having been subjected to the severest criticism.

The sympathetic reader will find tenderness, beauty, melody, and many passages of splendid descriptive power, while at the same time he will feel that the style is somewhat labored and artificial, and lacks the naturalness and spontaneity of the greater prophets. Ezekiel was more of a writer than preacher. Some of his oracles were written before they were spoken, and some of them appear never to have been spoken at all.

The keynote to Ezekiel's prophecies is his conception of the Divine holiness.

It is for their sins that God's people are punished. Though the heathen may have thought that Jehovah was unable to preserve Israel from her enemies, the end shall prove otherwise. Only for a brief period shall she be punished, and then she shall be restored to divine favor again, and these very heathen nations, now filled with contempt for Israel's God, shall learn his power and holiness. Jehovah *must* restore his people, for so alone can his godhead be vindicated before the nations that now speak contemptuously of him. Jehovah *can* restore his people, for of his free grace he will forgive their sins, and by his Spirit he will transform their natures and **render** them obedient.

Ezekiel, especially in the last chapters, lays more stress upon ceremonial observances than the prophets are wont to do. In the time of the temple the people had trusted too much in ceremony; now, deprived of all temple worship, they were liable to forget it altogether. So Ezekiel, unlike his great predecessors, Isaiah and Jeremiah, prescribes an elaborate ritual, and enforces it as a necessity. He finds

the surest guarantee against the nation's return to idolatry in a well-ordered ceremonial. But he does not overlook the deeper need of moral righteousness, and with all of the prophets he insists that the law shall be written on the heart.

Ezekiel is nowhere quoted in the New Testament, and traces of his influence are few, except in the Apocalypse.

Among the Hebrews who were borne away captive to Babylon was a youth named Daniel. He was carried into captivity in the third year of Jehoiakim's reign, 605 B. C., eight years before Ezekiel, whom, however, he probably survived many years. Nothing is known of his parentage or family, but he appears to have been of royal or noble birth. With three other young men, all like himself of noble blood, he was instructed in the learning of the Chaldeans and trained for the king's service. By his success in recalling and interpreting a forgotten dream of the king, which had baffled all the wise men, he was advanced to a position of great power and influence. He interpreted a second dream, in which Nebuchadnezzar was threatened with a loss of his reason for the space of seven years; and also explained the meaning of the handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar's feast, for which latter service he was clothed in purple, adorned with a chain of gold, and proclaimed one of the three chief rulers of the kingdom. Darius the Median promoted him still further, by making him chief of this supreme "Board of Three," whereupon the others were so enraged as to seek his ruin, and they succeeded in having him cast into the lions' den, from which, however, he was miraculously delivered. He does not appear at all times to have retained his high position and influence, nor

Daniel
about 575 B. C.

always to have resided at court, but at the accession of Cyrus, in the third year of whose reign (548 B. C.) he records his last vision (chap. 10-12), he seems to have been still in favor. It is probable that he died soon after this, but we have no knowledge of the time, place, or circumstances of his death. Ezekiel mentions him as a pattern of righteousness (14 : 14, 20), and as a model of wisdom (28 : 3).

The book is divided into two nearly equal parts, the first six chapters containing the historical incidents, and the last six chapters containing the visions. It is written in Hebrew and Aramaic, the Hebrew portion being chapters 1-2, 4 a, and chapters 8-12, while the Aramaic is found in chapters 2, 4 b-7, 28. This double language of the book has never been satisfactorily explained. The unity of the work, in spite of this diversity of language, is generally acknowledged.

In the Hebrew canon, the book of Daniel is not reckoned among the prophets, but among the so-called Holy Writings, the Hagiographa, perhaps because the work is not cast in the old prophetic mold, but is a distinctively new kind of writing. It is the earliest type of apocalyptic literature, and became the model to which all such works were afterward conformed, and has for its latest and greatest echo the Revelation of the Apostle John.

A remarkable feature of the book is the fact that in the first seven chapters the history of Daniel is narrated as if by some other person, while in the last five chapters the prophet speaks in his own name. This would seem to show that, in its final shape at least, the book is from another hand than Daniel's. Many other considerations confirm this view, which is accepted by the most eminent critics, though they differ widely as to the date when, and the purpose for which, it was written.

Until lately our only sources of information concerning the times of Daniel were the Scriptures and the Greek historians, but the unveiling of the Assyrian monuments has added very largely to our knowledge of that period, and has also made the interpretation of Daniel, always one of the burning questions of Old Testament study, more difficult and perplexing than ever.

Even so orthodox a writer as Prof. Sayce,¹ declares that the book is irreconcilable with the revelations of the monuments, and advises the abandonment of all attempts to defend its historical accuracy; but such a judgment seems over-hasty and ill-advised, when we find so radical a writer as Cheyne admitting that "the points of disagreement between the book of Daniel and Babylonian history have probably been exaggerated."² With all we have learned from the inscriptions we have as yet but a vague and indistinct knowledge of the course of events in that distant period of history, and it would be wise to admit that many things might have happened that are not recorded, like Nebuchadnezzar's loss of reason, and that many things have been recorded that are not yet discovered and deciphered, for surely all the inscriptions have not yet been brought to light. Certain writers deny the infallibility of the Scriptures but accept the infallibility of the monuments, but even they should not insist upon the infallibility of the silence of the monuments; they should not insist that whatever is not found on the monuments is therefore not historical. There are indeed disagreements between the book of Daniel and the inscriptions, which we ought not to disregard; but how often has the discovery of some missing link furnished a perfect explanation of apparent divergencies in reliable historical authorities?

Professor Sayce believes that Darius the Mede is but a reflection into the past of Darius the Persian; but shall we say there was no Darius the Mede because pro-

¹ "The Higher Criticism and the Monuments," pp. 497-536.

² "Encyclopædia Britannica," article, "Daniel."

fane history mentions only Darius the Persian? Again, is it impossible that Belshazzar was appropriately styled king because the inscriptions inform us that he was only the son of the last-reigning king, Nabonidus? May he not have occupied the throne while the father took the field at the head of the army of defense and so have been properly designated king? It has been said that the scenery of Daniel does not agree with what we know of Babylonian life from other sources. But is not this making a little knowledge go a great way?

How much do we know about ancient Babylonian life that we should pronounce so positively upon Daniel's picture of it? Surely in certain matters he exhibits a familiarity with what are known to be Babylonian customs, as for example, the presence of women at feasts, the dress of the courtiers, and the punishment of burning alive. Would not these truthful features suggest the possible accuracy of others, concerning which we can simply say at present that the monuments have not confirmed them? The French critic, Lenormant, finds "a truthfulness of Babylonian coloring piercing through the injuries of time, which can only be accounted for by ascribing the original work to the prophet Daniel."

When we pass from the historical chapters to the apocalyptic portion (chap. 7-12), we enter upon questions still more difficult and perplexing, "and," as Westcott says, "certain results are comparatively few."

Who can say what is the true interpretation to put upon these visions? Are they prophecy in the same sense as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel? If prophecy, have they already been fulfilled, or are they yet to be accomplished? Perplexities similar to those we meet in interpreting the Revelation of John confront us here. Beza said that Calvin displayed his wisdom in not attempting to explain the Apocalypse, and perhaps commentators would show more wisdom in letting Daniel's visions alone than they have ever exhibited in their explanations of his meaning. What

wild theories have disorted themselves over the pages of Daniel ! All sorts of foolish and unbridled expectations have here figured out their right to live. Millerism, Second Adventism, Anti-Romanism, and a host of other isms have found their strongest proof-texts in misinterpreted sentences of this book.

But while such interpreters have forced into Daniel's words meanings he never dreamed of, it is equally certain that no perfectly satisfactory explanation of his various symbols and figures ever has been or can yet be given. The ten horns have been explained as the successors of Alexander the Great and as the European kingdoms that sprang out of the ruins of the Roman Empire ; the little horn has been regarded as Antiochus Epiphanes and as the Pope of Rome ; the seventy weeks have been supposed to represent the interval between the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the appearance of Cyrus, and also the time between the first of these events and the crucifixion of Christ ; the anointed one has been regarded as the high priest Onias, and as Jesus. And besides these interpretations, which represent the two lines of radical and conservative scholars, a whole host of other and less authoritative explanations of these and other features of the visions have from time to time appeared.

In the exposition of Daniel, the issue is not between one interpretation which is clear, scholarly, and reasonable, and others which are unscholarly and full of contradictions, but between various interpretations, all of which are beset with difficulties.

The lines of cleavage do not run along the dividing line between orthodoxy and rationalism, for many of the staunchest defenders of the genuineness of the book have discarded the old and traditional interpretation. Professor Stuart, of Andover Seminary, one of the ablest advocates of the authenticity of Daniel, limits the outlook of the seer to the age of Antiochus, and finds no reference in the book to later times. So also Professor Cowles and Bishop West-

cott, the latter of whom thinks, however, that the first fulfillment was to be followed by a more complete one later, and holds that "in this way the book remains a 'prophecy' while it is also a 'revelation' ; and its most special predictions acquire an abiding significance." The interpreter who shall attempt to write a commentary on the book of Daniel needs great and unusual wisdom. And it certainly is not an evidence of wisdom when some men ventilate their opinions upon these controverted passages with such an air of calm assurance as if there were no question of the correctness of their interpretations. The one most to be trusted is the one who sees on all sides of these perplexing and enigmatical utterances and presents his own views with becoming diffidence and modesty.

Some advanced critics have denied the prophetic character of the book, and as even a good many conservative scholars have accepted this view, it is worth while to call attention to this phase of the controversy over Daniel.

The founder of this theory was Porphyry, who lived about 300 A. D., and who anticipated the chief objection of modern criticism to the prophetic character of Daniel. He said that the book is true history up to the times of Antiochus Epiphanes, and false afterward, and therefore it is a forgery. Modern criticism has accepted the truth of the first part of this statement, but not of the last part. It has admitted the vague and uncertain portrayal of the times succeeding Antiochus, which is in marked contrast with the clear and minute account of the progress of events previously, but it has not, except in the case of rationalistic critics of the extremest sort, been willing to regard the work as mere forgery. Driver probably represents the more moderate and candid of these adverse critics, and he accords the book a high place in the library of religious literature. He says :¹

"Daniel, it cannot be doubted, was a historical person, one of the Jewish exiles in Babylon, who interpreted Nebu-

¹ "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament," pp. 479, 480.

chadnezzar's dreams, and foretold, as a seer, something of the future fate of the Chaldean and Persian empires. Perhaps written materials were at the disposal of the author.¹ It is, at any rate, probable that for the descriptions contained in chapters two to seven he availed himself of some work or works dealing with the history of Babylon in the sixth century B. C. These traditions are cast by the author into a literary form, with a special view to the circumstances of his own time. The motive underlying chapters one to six is manifest. The aim of these chapters is not merely to describe who Daniel was, or to narrate certain incidents in his life ; it is also to magnify the God of Daniel, to show how he, by his providence, frustrates the purposes of the proudest of earthly monarchs, while he defends his servants who cleave to him faithfully in the midst of temptation. The narratives in chapters one to six are thus adapted to supply motives for the encouragement, and models for the imitation, of those suffering under the persecution of Antiochus. In chapters seven to twelve, definiteness and distinctness are given to Daniel's visions of the future ; and it is shown in particular that the trial of the saints will reach ere long its appointed term."

Other critics offer still other explanations of this marked contrast between the prophecies of events before and after the times of Antiochus. Westcott holds that the book was probably recast in the time of Ezra, and Zöckler that some of its predictions have been tampered with, while other able scholars believe there is no need of apologizing for or explaining this difference in distinctness, but hold it to be an example of those "divers manners" (Heb. 1 : 1) in which God spake of old time unto the fathers by the prophets.

Whatever may be our attitude toward this question of the prophetic character of the book of Daniel, it is evident that none of us feel precisely about it as past generations did.

When interpreters unhesitatingly explained Daniel's visions as a sort of inspired chart of universal history, filled

¹ Driver does not regard Daniel as the author.

with minute predictions of events of modern times and even of times yet to come, especially when in the days of Roman persecution they saw portrayed in these visions the growth of papal power and read the exact date of its promised downfall—when they thought they beheld reflected upon its pages, as in a mirror, the latest history of the world, seeing indeed “through a glass darkly,” but still with something of shadowy distinctness the outline of things yet to come, they read this book with an eager interest that most Bible students of to-day know nothing of.

But if we can no longer know and understand that fascinating power of this book for other times, we may yet find it most instructive and inspiring as a key to the age in which it was produced, and as an illustration of the struggles of the Jewish church with the Greek powers by which it was surrounded.

As such a transcript of the past it has lessons for all time. “This conflict,” says Westcott, “has a typical import, and foreshows in its characteristic outlines the abiding and final conflict of the people of God and the powers of evil, so that the true work of the interpreter must be to determine historically the nature of each event signalized in the prophetic picture, that he may draw from the past the lessons of the future.”

The view which Daniel takes of history is a very broad and comprehensive one. While even in earlier prophets there is a true perception of the philosophy of history, it occupies in Daniel a much more conspicuous place.

He beholds a continuous succession of world powers, whose rise and fall is predetermined by the Almighty, who appears in his pages as the one who indeed “ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will.” The career of these world empires is already foreseen and portrayed, and their ultimate overthrow by the now insig-

nificant kingdom of God is clearly predicted, while he emphasizes the exact moment of that great and glorious triumph.

The theological ideas of Daniel are also a distinct advancement upon his predecessors in certain particulars, as for instance, in his doctrine of angels, of the resurrection, and of future judgment, which are taught in his pages with a greater distinctness than anywhere else in the Old Testament.

SUMMARY.

The fall of Jerusalem. Its dreadful features. The rejoicing of Judah's enemies. OBADIAH. Who he was. Relation to Jeremiah. Analysis of his book. His style. His book a favorite with modern Jews. EZEKIEL. The circumstances of the captives in Babylon. Ezekiel's character. His increasing influence. The three-fold division of his prophecy. Characteristics of the first part. His political wisdom. Striking teachings. Characteristic features of the second division. Purpose of closing chapters. The New Temple. Genuineness of the book. Its style. Key-note—God's holiness. Not quoted in the New Testament. DANIEL. His position in the king's court. The two-fold division of the book. Its position in the Hebrew canon. Doubts about its historical character. Unreasonableness of much of this criticism. Doubts about the prophetic portion. No satisfactory exposition of these visions. Opposing views. Chief objection of modern criticism. Not a forgery. Reasonable explanation of its aim. Decreased interest in the book explained. Daniel's broad view of history. His theological ideas.

CHAPTER XI

PROPHETS OF THE RESTORATION

(538 B. C.—400 B. C. *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*)

JUDAH'S long night of exile came at last to its close. Cyrus, a Persian chief, and a subject of the Medes, gradually extended his conquests until, in the year 538 B. C., he took Babylon itself, and established the Persian empire. For reasons unknown to us he appears to have taken a deep interest in the captive Jews, and at once issued an edict permitting their return to their native land. About fifty thousand availed themselves of the privilege, but the great majority of the exiles preferred to remain in Babylonia. They had taken Jeremiah's advice¹ to build houses, cultivate lands, and seek in all possible ways to make the land of exile a home, and now this new country was dearer to them than their fatherland. Most of them had been born in Babylonia, and felt that natural attachment to it which we all feel toward the land of our birth.

All of those who returned were Jews. None of the Israelites, so far as we know, accompanied them. A very large portion were priests, who naturally desired to be in the land where alone they could follow their sacred calling. The journey must have been long and wearisome, for eighty years afterward Ezra, with a much smaller company, required four months to make it.

Arriving in Palestine they found the country in a most miserable condition. The former cities and villages were

¹ Jer. 29 : 4-7.

in ruins ; the fields were neglected and covered with thickets in which wild beasts swarmed ; the remaining inhabitants had almost relapsed into savagery ; while the surrounding nations were suspicious and hostile.

They at once set about building their ruined cities and villages and cultivating their fields, and, true to the religious impulse which had brought them there, they laid at once the foundation of a new temple, amid the mingled tears and shouts of the happy people (Ezra 3 : 8-13). But this outburst of feeling did not last long. The work was interrupted by the machinations of their enemies, and the people became discouraged and lost heart. Then they began to excuse themselves from further attempts to erect the temple, by declaring that the seventy years of exile were not yet over, and it was not time for the Lord's house to be built.¹ The truth however was, that they were becoming interested altogether in their own affairs, in building houses, cultivating fields, and seeking gain ; and even the constant misfortunes which had attended all their efforts did not seem to arouse them to their duty. Then arose Haggai and Zechariah and stirred up the people to take up again their neglected task of rebuilding the temple. They were successful, and in four years the house was finished and dedicated.

Haggai is generally believed to have been born in captivity, and to have returned with the first company of pilgrims, under the leadership of Zerubabel² and Joshua. Some, however, suppose that he was one of those old men whose memories reached across the space of nearly seventy years to the splendors of the first temple.³ His

Haggai
520 B. C.

¹ Haggai 1 : 2.

² This name means *born in Babylon*.

³ Ezra 3 : 12.

book informs us that he prophesied in the second year of the reign of Darius—that is, in 520 B. C.

His work is divided into five brief prophetic messages, all delivered within the short space of four months. Its analysis is as follows :

He rebukes the people for their neglect to build the Lord's house, and traces all their calamities to that neglect (1 : 1-12), and then adds an account of the success of this message, with a brief word of encouragement (1 : 13-15). Nearly a month later he urges the people to proceed in their work, in spite of the apparent meanness of this new temple, assuring them that its glory should exceed that of Solomon's (2 : 1-9). About two months later he warns his countrymen not to fail in carrying out their purpose, reminding them how God had punished their previous neglect by unfruitful seasons (2 : 10-19), and on the same day he declares God's favor toward Zerubbabel (2 : 20-23).

In style Haggai possesses no distinction among the prophets.

He is the most prosaic of them all, without a spark of that imaginative and poetic beauty which in a greater or less degree distinguishes nearly all the rest. He has been styled "the most matter of fact of all the prophets." Still his direct, forcible words received the best proofs of their effectiveness in the obedience of the people.

Haggai possessed a stout ally in Zechariah, a younger contemporary apparently, who commenced his prophetic labors two months later than Haggai's first message, hence in 520 B. C. He was the grandson of Iddo, probably the priest who returned among the first exiles. His priestly origin was undoubtedly of great service in the task he

Zechariah
520 B. C.

attempted of arousing the people to an interest in their ancient forms of worship.

There were times in the past history of the nation when its devotion to externals deserved and received the stern rebuke of the prophets, but now all was changed. Almost seventy years had passed away since the temple was destroyed, and the majority of the people had never witnessed the impressive ritual of the temple service, and had no enthusiasm for it. The danger therefore now was, not of a deadly, freezing formalism, from which all heart had disappeared, but of a complete indifference to all ceremonies of worship. The prophet did not now need to rebuke formalism so much as to teach the necessity of forms in order to preserve the very life of religion, and his instructions must have come with peculiar power, because he himself belonged to the priestly order. His efforts seem to have been successful, and henceforth there was no lack of attention to the temple service, though Malachi, nearly a century later, had to enforce the lesson again.

The analysis of the book is as follows : There are three distinct portions, chapters 1-8, 9-11, 12-14.

In the first six chapters the prophet narrates a series of eight visions, in which the present and future condition of the people, and the gracious promises of God toward Jerusalem, the temple, and the priesthood, are symbolically set forth, together with the divine threatenings against wickedness, the whole closing with a striking Messianic prediction. In chapters seven and eight he answers a question about fasts, takes occasion to emphasize the greater importance of the moral law, and gives a striking picture of the prosperity of the obedient.

In the second portion of the book (chap. 9-11), he announces God's judgment against the neighboring nations and his favor toward Jerusalem, whose king shall come in

lowly guise, as the Prince of Peace (chap. 9). The former evils of the nation are ascribed to idolatry, but security and prosperity are promised for the future (chap. 10). By a bold transition the writer passes to a severe denunciation of the people and their leaders.

In the third portion of the book (chap. 12-14), all nations are depicted as gathered against Judah and Jerusalem, but in vain, for God will deliver his people (chap. 12). False prophets shall disappear, and though multitudes shall perish, the rest of the people shall be purified (chap. 13). Another assault upon Jerusalem is described, and a period of great calamity, which is to be followed by the reign of universal peace and holiness, after all the enemies of God's people are destroyed (chap. 14).

More than three hundred years ago the question was raised as to whether the last six chapters of the book were written by Zechariah or not.

The majority of critics have been led by the marked difference in style and ideas between these and the former chapters to attribute them to another, or generally to two other prophets who lived at distinct periods, thus breaking up the book into three separate prophecies. Great differences of opinion exist as to the supposed date of these last chapters. Generally they have been assigned to an earlier date than Zechariah, chapters 9-11 to the time of Isaiah, and chapters 12-14 to that of Jeremiah; but there is no uniform opinion, as might naturally be expected on this matter, and some critics assign both portions to a later period than the time of Zechariah. Although the majority of critics agree in crediting the last six chapters to a different hand or different hands from that which wrote the first eight, some very eminent scholars maintain the integrity and unity of the entire book. The division between these two parties is not that between the rationalistic and supernaturalistic schools, for some of the most orthodox critics

maintain the divided authorship of the book, while some of the most heterodox champion its unity; among the latter the exceedingly rationalistic scholar De Wette, who, after having held the theory of different authors, was driven by further study to vindicate the view that the whole prophecy was written by a single author. If these latter portions are from another source, then we meet here the same phenomenon as in Proverbs and Psalms, when the works of other writers have become incorporated among the writings of some well-known author. The question of the inspiration and religious value of these chapters does not enter legitimately into the controversy.

In style, while Zechariah exhibits a fertile and exuberant imagination, with occasional touches of poetic beauty and passages of great spiritual power, he is inferior to the great prophets who preceded him.

This is more especially true if we limit his authorship to the first eight chapters, since the poetic value of the last six is considerably greater than that of the previous chapters, while the point of view is loftier and the horizon wider. In the visions (chap. 1-6) his language is quite obscure, and very difficult to interpret, in spite of his accompanying explanations, and is destitute of that poetical finish and symmetry which characterizes the productions of an earlier period.

With Malachi the long and splendid day of Hebrew prophecy comes to a noble close. His words are like the last lingering glow of color in the western sky after the sun has set.

Malachi
about 430 B. C.

We are in profound ignorance of his personal history and even of the times in which he lived, except so far as we can glean something from his book. According to a tradition, which is well sustained by the character of his teachings, he was a contemporary of Ezra

and Nehemiah, and therefore nearly a century later than Haggai and Zechariah, about 430 B. C.

His name means literally "Messenger of Jehovah," or "My Messenger," and from earliest times the question has been raised whether this be the prophet's genuine name or only his official title.

A Hebrew tradition identifies him with Ezra ; but it is very unlikely that if Ezra had written the book his authorship would have been either forgotten or ignored. If, however, Malachi cannot be identified with Ezra, the spirit in which he labored was precisely that of the great reformer.

The situation which Malachi faced was filled with difficulties that might have appalled even an Isaiah. He encountered a spirit of skepticism and of moral and religious indifference that needed heroic treatment, but he performed his task with splendid courage and wisdom.

The expectations of the people, upon their return from the captivity, had evidently not been realized, the former glory of the nation had not been restored, and men began to question whether, after all, God concerned himself much with human affairs. He seemed to delight in evil men as much as in the good (2 : 17), and there was no profit in keeping his ordinances (3 : 14), so they said. With this growth of doubt, there came a relaxation of moral earnestness and religious scrupulousness. Divorces became frequent ; marriage with heathen women were contracted ; tithes for the support of the temple were neglected ; and inferior offerings, the lame and sick and mutilated, were laid upon God's altar. In this degeneracy the priests shared ; they became thoroughly mercenary and idle, and favored the growing looseness of morals. There was danger of the nation's losing its distinctive character as the people of God.

In meeting these evils Malachi evinced the same bold, unflinching, uncompromising spirit which had characterized

the prophets from the beginning, and in the fearlessness and wisdom with which he performed his mission he is inferior to none of his predecessors. His style, however, is far less poetic, and is characterized by an innovation in its literary method. He states briefly the truth he would inculcate, then follows this by the objections of opponents, and finally replies to these objections. His style is therefore rather that of a reasoner than of a poet.

His book contains four chapters in our translation, but in the Hebrew only three, the third and fourth chapters of the English Bible constituting there but a single chapter.

Its analysis is as follows : After showing the high honor paid to Israel by Jehovah, the prophet severely condemns the priests for their mercenary spirit, threatens them with condign punishment, and draws, as a contrast to them, the ideal picture of a true priest (1-2 : 9). He rebukes divorces and intermarriages with the heathen (2 : 10-16). In answer to the objection that the wicked is no worse off than the righteous, he pictures the coming of Jehovah's messenger to purify the sons of Levi and execute swift judgment against evildoers (2 : 17-3 : 6). God's promises are vindicated, the people invited to test them, and those who make false distinctions between right and wrong are re-proved ; and the prophecy closes with an exhortation to obedience, and with the prediction of Elijah's return (3 : 7-4 : 6).

With Malachi, Hebrew prophecy became silent for four hundred years. The living voice of the prophet was no longer heard, and the teachings of the past were allowed to do their silent work in the hearts of the people. But though centuries rolled on with no prophetic voice to break the silence or to dissipate the gloom, the expectation of a

revival of prophetic utterances was cherished as a bright, undying hope, and when the great forerunner appeared, all the people readily accepted him as an undoubted prophet of the Lord.¹ The real essence of prophetic teaching, the necessity of moral righteousness, had not been understood, however, and it was only a little group that stood on the threshold of the New Testament to greet the dawning day in the spirit of the prophets. Yet that little group, standing there with faces radiant and uplifted, is the true and legitimate outcome and fruitage of prophetic labors, the first-fruits of a yet mightier harvest that is to come. Because the prophets had succeeded in kindling in a few hearts a true Messianic hope, Jesus Christ found at the very outset a few already prepared for his message and mission. They were waiting to greet the rising sun of righteousness, and might have voiced their experience in the words of Philip to Nathanael, that most splendid representative of the best traditions of Israelitish life: "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph (John 1 : 45).

SUMMARY.

The return from captivity. The task before the people. The quick decline of enthusiasm. HAGGAI. His message and style. ZECHARIAH. His priestly origin. His task. Analysis of his book. The authorship of the last six chapters. Style. MALACHI. His name. The condition of the nation. His true prophetic spirit. Analysis of his book. Close of Hebrew prophecy. Its fruit in the nation. Its truest fruitage in the hearts of a few.

¹ Matt. 14 : 5 ; 21 : 26 ; Luke 20 : 6.

CHRONOLOGICAL CHART

KINGS AND PROPHETS OF ISRAEL		KINGS OF ASSYRIA	EVENTS OF THE HISTORY OF GREECE		ROME
JUDAH	ISRAEL				
Rehoboam 938-921	Jeroboam I. 938-916		Hesiod and Homer about 900 Lycurgus 900-850		Rome founded 753
Joash 837-797					
<i>Joel</i>	Jeroboam II. 782-741 <i>Jonah</i> <i>Amos</i> <i>Hosea</i>				
Uzziah 777-736	Jehu's dynasty ends in 741	Tiglath Pileser III. invades Samaria, 734			
<i>Isaiah</i>		Sargon captures Samaria, 722	Sappho 610		
Jotham 736-735	Reigns of usurpers	Sennacherib invades Judah and miracu- lously defeated, 701			
Ahaz 735-726	Fall of Samaria, 722, and end of Northern Kingdom				
Hezekiah 726-697					
<i>Micah</i>					
Manasseh 697-641	<i>Nahum</i>				
<i>Isaiah's death</i>					
Josiah 639-608		Destruction of Nineveh, 607			
<i>Zephaniah</i>					
<i>Jeremiah</i>					
Jehoiakim 608-597		Nebuchadnezzar			

KINGS AND PROPHETS OF JUDAH	ASSYRIAN HISTORY	EGYPTIAN HISTORY	GRECIAN HISTORY	ROMAN HISTORY
<i>Habakkuk</i>				
<i>Daniel</i> carried to Babylon			Foundation of Marseilles, 600	
Zedekiah				
597-587				
<i>Ezekiel</i>				
Fall of Jerusalem 587	Nebuchadnezzar captures Jerusalem 587	Some of the exiles go to Egypt, Jeremiah among them, 586	Legislation of Solon 594	
<i>Daniel's</i> prophetic activity				
Return from exile in 538	Cyrus conquers Babylonia, 550			
<i>Haggai</i>	Cyrus takes Babylon, 538, and establishes Persian Empire		Battle of Marathon 490	Expulsion of Tarquins, and establishment of the Republic, 510
<i>Zechariah</i>	Darius, 521		Battle of Salamis 480	
Nehemiah's visits to Jerusalem in 444 and 443	Artaxerxes 465-425		Herodotus Peloponnesian war 431	
<i>Malachi</i>			Pericles	

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